OUTLOOKS

CANADA'S **GLBT** MAGAZINE

ISSUE 185

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Image of Lance Bass by Celebrity Photographer Mike Ruiz

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October 2010

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On the Cover:

Lance Bass explores the edgier side of fashion in a striking image shot by celebrity photographer Mike Ruiz. See page 54 for this month's FRAMED feature to admire more of Mike's artwork.

and the Winners are...

Atlantis Gay Cruise Mexico for Two
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The Flamingo Inn Amongst the Flowers, Fort Lauderdale one week accommodations, $1,000 travel voucher
Glen Watson
Toronto, ON

Congratulations to our 2010 Pride Winners!

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OUTLOOKS Magazine is printed and produced in Canada ten times a year.

~ BRETT TAYLOR

Some changes are afoot here at OUTLOOKS with regard to our distribution channels which will affect the timing of our issues. Starting with this issue, the revised distribution network will see the magazine being distributed on the 15th of every month as opposed to during the first week as it has been for over 13 years now.

This issue contains some great new additions to the magazine—added features that you, the reader, have been asking us to incorporate.

To start with, you will see an enhanced Looks Section as we welcome two new editors to the OUTLOOKS team—Jason Krell and Alykhan Velji—The Style Guys.

Some of you may already know Aly from his numerous appearances on design shows like "Designer Superstar Challenge," "Style Department" with Suzanne Dimma and "My RONA Home." As one of Canada's hottest interior designers, he is also fast making himself a name as a media personality.

A longtime writer for OUTLOOKS, Jason has specialized in lifestyle features, fashion and celebrity interviews. As a private public relations consultant and former model himself, Jason has a great insight into the fashion world. And it is this insight, paired with Alykhan's design flare, that will make them a dynamic duo for OUTLOOKS. I look forward to working with The Style Guys.

So, you can look for every new issue to contain a combination of fashion, décor trends and interior design, not to mention our internationally recognized original fashion spreads produced by Len Mastaler of I Model Management.

And this issue sees us presenting a new section as well—The Gay Gastronome. It will be devoted to those of us who like to eat and drink great food in great spaces, as well as some excellent information for the gourmet in all of us.

Along with interesting, and hopefully tasty news from coast to coast, each month, we will be reviewing some fabulous places to eat, based on flavours, service, atmosphere, price range and overall quality. And, in case you are in the mood to cook yourself, each issue will also feature a profile and interview with some great Canadian Chefs—and, hopefully, a recipe straight from their menus.

And we have some very interesting features on a number of important GLBT issues coming your way as well. This month, the issue is Surrogacy and what GLBT Canadians have to do to start their own families. In the next couple of issues, we will be taking a close look at the Canadian Immigration policies and how they relate to refugees and immigrants seeking asylum in our country, due to fears for their personal safety just because they are gay. And, maybe more importantly, what role individual GLBT Canadians, GLBT organizations and GLBT businesses can play in both putting added pressure on the government, as well as helping individuals who are forced into this position by their home countries.

In the next issue, Trailblazers will spotlight two nightclubs making a difference from coast to coast. November also marks the time for our Annual On-Line Reader's Survey. It is your opportunity to tell us what you think—what you like and what you don't—and maybe win a cool prize in the process.

And closing out the year, Trailblazers spotlights HIV/AIDS' efforts just in time for World AIDS Day, while rapping with Mambo Italiano's Steve Galluccio on his new film Funkytown and the disco days of Montréal.

So, the way I see it, there's lot's of great reading ahead. O

Notice to Readers

Change of Distribution Date

Effective October 1, 2010
OUTLOOKS Magazine
will be available
on the 15th of each month.

*** This date change affects all distribution points from coast-to-coast as well as our dedicated subscribers.**

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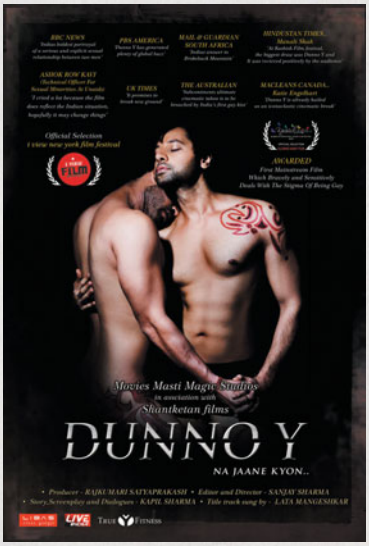
Bollywood Breathrough?

It was only a year ago that the Delhi High Court did away with the law that criminalized homosexuality; but Indian society is making some rapid changes. Dunno Y Na Jaane Kyon, which some have dubbed as Bollywood's Brokeback Mountain, is the first film in India's huge film industry to give serious treatment to a homosexual relationship. The producers had trouble finding actors willing to play gay men—especially with a 90 second kissing scene—and there was some fear of a backlash from religious extremists. There was, however, support from some well-known and respected actresses and, when the film opened in Mumbai, there was a sold-out house. The director stated that Indian society, especially the younger generation, is much more open to topics which were once considered unmentionable.



Another sign of changing times in India will be the introduction of gay condoms by a company called Family Planning Promotional Trust. The condoms will include extra lubricant in order to make anal intercourse more enjoyable. A release date for the Spice Up condoms has not yet been announced.

Tokyo Gay Pride

For the first time in three years, Tokyo held a Gay Pride Parade in August. Because homosexuality remains such a social taboo in Japan and with the gay community having little or no political support, great difficulty had been experienced in finding persons who would openly support and work for Pride celebrations. This had led to cancellation of celebrations in previous years. Leading up to the parade this year were drag shows, theatre productions and other public displays aiming to increase acceptance of homosexuality in Japanese society.

Joy and Pride in Nepal

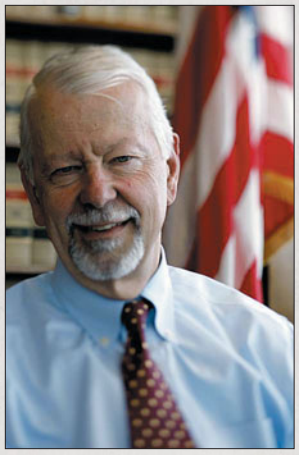
Led by openly gay politician Sunil Pant, riding on an elephant, Nepal's first Pride Parade took place in August. Surrounded by hundreds of celebrants in colourful costumes waving rainbow flags, the procession wound its joyful way through the streets of Kathmandu in what Pant declares is the first annual international Pride festival for the Himalayan nation. Ambassadors from several other nations attended or sent letters of support for the event. In 2006, a law recognizing gays and lesbians as "third gender" citizens gave them legal protection, and a bill is currently making its way through parliament which would recognize same-sex marriage.

Proposition 8 and Don't Ask Don't Tell

It can take a legal expert to follow the tortuous road of American politics and legal struggles for the queer community; however two key events may change the landscape for many LGBT Americans in the near future.

Proposition 8, the contentious initiative that took away from queer Californians the right to marry, was overturned by Judge Vaughn Walker, who declared that it was unconstitutional. The decision is being appealed by supporters of the same-sex ban. Governor Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Brown, who first backed the initiative, have publicly declared that they will not support the appeal and that Judge Walker's decision should stand. A conservative group had filed a legal request that Schwarzenegger and Brown be forced to defend Prop 8; however, the request was denied. Judge Walker has said that supporters of Prop 8 may not have the right to appeal his decision, since they cannot prove they will be harmed by same-sex marriages.

Another judge, Virginia Phillips, found in favour of the Log Cabin Republicans, who brought the case that the military policy of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) was unconstitutional. Not only did Phillips agree that the policy violates the First and Fifth Amendments of the American Constitution, she further stated that the policy had a "direct and deleterious effect" on the armed forces. The ruling is being examined by politicians in Washington, D.C., where a senate vote on DADT, led by Senator Harry Reid, is scheduled to take place shortly. An ironic twist on the matter is that the Justice Department argued in favour of DADT during the trial even though the Obama administration has stated its intention to do away with the policy.



German Foreign Minister Weds Long-Time Partner

Guido Westerwelle, Germany's Foreign Minister, wed Michael Mronz in a civil ceremony, presided over by the mayor of Bonn. The private event was attended by close family and friends. Germany recognizes civil unions which confer most of the benefits of marriage, excluding joint adoption and some tax benefits. Westerwelle gave the opening address at the Gay Games in Cologne, Germany this summer.

Russian Gay Activist Arrested

The international queer community was worried to hear that Nikolai Alekseev, a prominent Russian gay activist, was arrested at Moscow airport just as he was about to board a plane for Geneva. It is believed that he was taken by members of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). The FSB refused to answer any questions about the whereabouts of Alekseev or even confirm if he was being detained by them. Conflicting reports have come out of Russia. Phone messages, purporting to come from Alekseev, said he was in Minsk, outside of Moscow, while another report claims that Alekseev's phone was taken from him by police.

Alekseev is a key organizer of Moscow Pride celebrations, which have been banned for the last five years. Alekseev stated earlier this year that he intended to bring a complaint to the European Court about the ban and that he intended to organize a picket calling for the resignation of Moscow mayor Luzhkov. Friends of Alekseev believe that these proposed actions were the reason behind his abrupt arrest. Fellow activists say that they have seen Alekseev, that he is now free and intends to continue his work for queer rights; but Alekseev has not been seen publicly as of this writing.

Mehlman Comes Out

Ken Mehlman, the man who was the campaign manager for President Bush's bid for election in 2004 and who was, at one time, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, has publicly declared that he is gay. Mehlman told a reporter that it had taken him a long time to come to terms with his sexuality. Still proud to be a Republican, Mehlman plans to use his influence within the party to be an advocate for marriage equality.

Notes from Britain

A number of interesting tidbits from England:

Crispin Blunt, a prominent Conservative British member of parliament, and uncle of actress Emily Blunt, has publicly come out, ending his twenty-year marriage.

Britain's Charity Commission has ruled that Catholic Care may not discriminate against same-sex couples in the organization's adoption service, and must adhere to the human rights laws of the European Union.

British spy Gareth Williams was found dead in his apartment. Rumours abound about S and M equipment allegedly found in Williams' apartment and that he may have been murdered by his gay lover. His family denies all these allegations.

George Michael was found guilty of driving under the influence of cannabis and has been sentenced to eight weeks' jail time. Michaels, who was found guilty of a similar offence in 2007, will serve four weeks in jail and the final four on probation.

Gay Saudi Diplomat Seeks Asylum

Ali Ahmad Aseeri has worked in the Saudi Consulate in Los Angeles for the last five years. Recently, however, Aseeri claims that other employees at the consulate began following him to gay bars and harassing him at work. He further states that Saudi officials have refused to renew his diplomatic passport and want to send him back to Saudi Arabia. Aseeri met with members of Homeland Security, asking for asylum, since he fears that returning to Saudi Arabia will mean certain death.

Jerusalem Ordered To Pay For Gay Community Centre

For that last eight years, the City of Jerusalem has refused requests for funding for the Open House for Pride and Tolerance, which organizes the annual Pride Parade; but that is about to change. A ruling from Israel's Supreme Court states that the organization serves a significant percentage of the city's population and, therefore, is entitled to financial support. Jerusalem is ordered to pay more than $120,000 to the centre. The City is not appealing the decision.

Twenty Years of Talented Queers

Earlier this year, the Inside Out Toronto LGBT Film and Video Festival celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Hurray! On this major milestone, the "little festival that could" proudly showcased an international roster of films, shorts, cartoons and documentaries that was comprehensive in its scope.

Queer voices from uniquely talented individuals filled the screens with political savvy, unlimited imagination and intense passions, helping to raise awareness for key issues facing gay communities around the globe.

This rich, unparalleled creativity and artistic expression by visionaries, who dare to challenge complacent or biased attitudes, was reflected in the overall excellence of their products. Whether humourously entertaining or viscerally disturbing, clearly the queer community's brightest, cutting-edge talents are filmmakers who can make a difference.

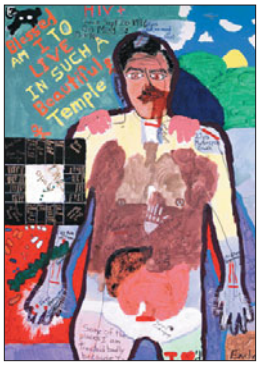
Among the festival's prestigious awards bestowed on exceptional Canadian works were: "Mark" by Mike Hoolboom, "Our Compass" by Tess Vo and "Chris" by Don Bapst. And some of the well-deserved accolades bestowed on exceptional foreign works were: "Plan B" by Marco Berger (Argentina), "The Secret Diaries of Miss Anne Lister" by James Kent (United Kingdom) and "Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls" by Leanne Pooley (New Zealand).

Although it could take some time locating these titles from local vendors or libraries, due to limited availability, it's definitely worth it. And so is checking into the film treasures of Francois Ozon, E.E. Cassidy, Haim Tabakman, Tina Mabry, Javier Fuentes-Leon, Adam Salky, Lydia Nibley and Nicole Opper to discover their enigmatic, queer voices. And that's just the tip of the iceberg!

Dig deep into the festival's archives for other, hopefully available, titles that won't be coming to a movie theatre near you any time soon. Long may queer talent thrive!

HIV Edmonton Wins 2010 Laurel Award

Recognition as Bronze Recipient for the 2010 Bodymapping Program



HIV Edmonton was named as the Bronze Recipient during the 2010 Laurel Awards luncheon. The Laurel Awards are sponsored by Edmonton law firm Duncan & Craig LLP, honouring outstand-ing innovation by not-for-profit groups in the metro Edmonton area. This year marks the 16th anniversary for the Laurel Awards, which were established by Duncan & Craig LLP in 1994 to commemorate the law firm's centennial.

HIV Edmonton was named the Bronze Recipient for the Bodymapping Program, a form of art and narrative therapy used to gain understanding of one's personal journey of living with HIV. HIV Edmonton was presented with the bronze medal and a cheque for $1,000 at the luncheon on September 13, 2010.

BUMP's New Co-Host - Deb Pearce

Bump!, the world's first gay and lesbian travel and lifestyle television series begins its fourth year of production and will debut on the commis-sioning networks LOGO (Viacom-owned American gay network) in the spring of 2011, followed by the Canadian debut on OUTtv set for fall 2011.

In each episode, *Bump!* presents a new gay-friendly destination and gay human interest stories in a stylish and upbeat format.

New co-host Deb Pearce joins the series, and Charlie David returns for his fourth season as co-host. Deb is a celebrated and well-known Canadian comedian, performer, host and radio jock. Deb and Charlie will travel to exciting locations including Costa Rica, Boston, Provincetown, Saugatuck, Ottawa, Palm Springs, San Diego, West Hollywood, Sonoma County, Baltimore, Newcastle, Liverpool, Dublin and Belfast, as well as South American countries such as Peru, Argentina and Chile.

The show's website www.bumptv.com includes streaming video clips from selected episodes, and practical travel information. The site is a gay travelers' companion to the Bump television series, and includes tips on unique things to see, places to eat, shop and have fun, as well as links to gay and gay-friendly attractions, events and accommodations.

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Pride Toronto - Community Advisory Panel Announced

Pride Toronto recently announced that community consultations would be held in the fall to determine the way forward for the organization on several pressing issues. The consultations would be led by a panel comprised of "community leaders and friends," and would attempt to build bridges with the community.

"I'm very positive about the establishment of this panel, and excited to announce that the members have been finalized and the terms of reference have been established," says panel chair Rev. Brent Hawkes. Hawkes explains that the panel is an independent volunteer advisory body appointed by the Board of Pride Toronto. While it will operate under its own auspices, the committee will report to the Co-Chairs of the Board.

"It is important that the panel remains autonomous during this process while operating within the approved framework/mandate," says Hawkes. "It should be recognized that Pride Toronto is a willing part of this process, and, while it retains the right to accept or reject the panel's recommendations, it is committed to the process in order to rebuild its relationship with the community."

The approved panel members are as follows:

Brent Hawkes (panel chair, non-voting) – senior pastor at Toronto's Metropolitan Community Church and a long-time activist in the gay community.

Michael Went – municipal financial advisor for the provincial government and a co-founder of the Ontario Public Service Pride Network.

Prof. Lorraine Weinrib – currently appointed to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Law, and has taught comparative Constitutional Law since 1993. She has published extensively on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and on rights protection generally.

Angela Robertson – Director of Equity and Community Engagement at Women's College Hospital and former Executive Director at Sistering, an organization for poor and homeless women. Angela is the current Board Chair at Black CAP, and a member of University of Toronto's Mark Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies.

Douglas Elliott – respected human rights lawyer and an activist in favour of same-sex marriage. He has served as a director of AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) and was founding president of the International Lesbian and Gay Law Association (ILGLaw).

Nichola (Nicki) Ward – word-artist and performance poet whose work has a reputation for being fearless in its artistic and political commitment. She is the founder of TransRights.ca as well as a member of the Sherbourne Health Centre, the TransAccess Project at The 519 and various queer recovery groups.

Andre Goh – manager of the Diversity Management Unit for Toronto Police Services. He has worked with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and has a long history of involvement with Toronto's queer communities.

Kavita Joshi – the inaugural chair of the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) LGBT employment group and responsible for the bank's LGBT and Youth strategies. She was a board member of Inside Out Film Festival, Queer Press, and Desh Pardesh.

Raja Khouri – the Past President of the Canadian Arab Federation and co-founder of the Canadian Arab-Jewish Leadership Dialogue Group. He is currently a member of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The panel's core responsibilities will be as follows (excerpt from the Terms of Reference):

- Undertake a consultation process to seek input from the LGBTQ communities and other relevant informants, funders and corporations to examine the relevance of Pride Toronto in relation to these stakeholders, and the mandate within which they would like to see the organization operate the organization's core values and principles, and whether or not the organization is operating within that mandate.
- Based on the findings in the consultation process, develop a broad strategic recommended policy framework that will assist the Board of Pride Toronto ensure it defines its mission, vision and values, and operates consistently with the mandate's values and principles and maintains a positive relationship with the broader LGBTQ communities
- Provide strategic recommendations to the Board of Directors to structure the Board's strategic planning cycle and, as[MH11] appropriate, identify alternative organizational / governance structures to ensure the viability and sustainability of the organization, while maintaining a positive relationship and relevance with the broader LGBTQ communities.

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~ KEVIN ALDERSON, Ph.D., R. Psych.

Couch Talk –
The Musings of a Psychologist

Experiencing the Gay Cruise

I and others have written recently about how gay culture is changing before our eyes. A new ethos has emerged that is more embracing than our community was in the past. In effect, gay bars are more like mixed bars, and large Pride parades have become marketing opportunities for businesses to sell products or services to us. Still, the straight kingdom has been slow in reciprocating—I still feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, and ultimately disrespected at most straight events and in most straight venues—from straight bars to straight weddings, I always feel I have to "remember my place." It's not like I am a troublemaker (although I can be if you want me to); but I don't sit back and pretend I'm straight either (unless the super-hot sober dude next to me is and I want him badly).

It is refreshing to enter premises that cater almost entirely to the GLBT community, even if that means leaving land to say hello to a boatful of fellow queers. One such magical moment rocked me for four hours on August 1, 2010 as I boarded the CruiseyT Pride White Party Cruise in Vancouver.

I love the sight of shirtless men grooving to DJ music (yum)—and really—who doesn't? Enjoying a party is one of the simplest ways to celebrate pride in anything! Now that queer people can be open about themselves in the major cities in Canada and most other large cities in the western world, GLBT tourism has become a sizable market of its own. In fact, according to a recent report from South Carolina, the economic power of the gay market was estimated to be $610 billion in the US in 2005 (AFFA, n.d.). Market research reveals that there is a sizable percentage of gay and lesbian individuals that make more money than the average person, that are better educated, and that travel more (AFFA, n.d.). Furthermore, according to the US Chamber of Commerce, GLBT dollars represent about 10 percent of the nation's tourism revenue (AFFA, n.d.).

Queers looking for a holiday that incorporates GLBT culture are looking for a *gaycation*, as some have called it. Thankfully, in today's climate, they will find it. According to Wikipedia (2010), the most popular gay destinations today include (a) Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; (b) Madrid, Ibiza, Barcelona, and Gran Canaria; (c) Mykonos and Lesbos; (d) Tel Aviv; (e) Montreal and Toronto; (f) New York, San Francisco, and Provincetown; (g) Amsterdam; (h) Berlin; (i) Nice and Paris; (j) Buenos Aires; and (k) Brighton. The gay beach scene is epitomized by Ipanema beach in Brazil, Cacela Velha beach in Portugal, and Ga'ash beach in Israel.

A city or destination does not become a GLBT-positive environment by chance. Marketers need to promote a place that has made a conscious decision to attract GLBT dollars. This requires that the location has created a "prominent gay infrastructure" (Wikipedia, 2010, p. 1). That means having businesses, restaurants, nightlife, entertainment, organizations, hotels, and, of course, bars that cater to our community. If GLBT people do not feel welcome, safe, and respected, they will not return.

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (2008-2010) organizes an annual world convention dedicated to bringing together the tour agencies and travel specialists that cater to our community. For those interested in finding out more about gay destinations, you may want to peruse copies of *Out Traveler*, a magazine aimed at the gay and lesbian community. Their website is also a great source of information (**http://www.outtraveler.com/**).

The gay cruise industry is reportedly experiencing significant growth right now (Wikipedia, 2010). After being on the short, four-hour cruise, I can see why. Bring out the sun, the dance music, the booze, and the spirit of our community, and a good time is inevitable. It is hard to feel negative about being GLBT when you are with some of the coolest people around that know how to party.

But don't let me give you the wrong impression. The real lesson from a gay cruise is the same one we learn from other experiences—so long as you want to see deeper than the fun façade of a good time. It is not the destination that is important, but the people you meet along the way. A special thanks to Paul, Erik, and Joe who made my pride day a *proud* day—proud to know the three of you and the community to which we belong. O

Couch Talk references can be found at www.outlooks.ca

Kevin Alderson can be contacted by confidential email at **alderson@ucalgary.ca**, or by confidential voice mail at 403-605-5234.

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Mistress Manners

Illustration: Perry Mah

Please contact Mistress Manners with your questions at:
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Dear Mistress Manners,

Why do I always choose the exact same guy? Okay, they're not exactly the same. They have different jobs and they don't look exactly the same; but we always end up in the exact same arguments. Does this happen to everyone? How can I stop this from happening to me again? It has been ten years of this and I'm getting tired now.

~ Mr. Had Enough

Dear Mr. Had Enough,

It might not happen to everyone; but it definitely happens to the best of us. Did you ever see the interview with Bette Davis in which she laments that each of her five husbands was special in his own way, "and yet all of them the same"? So you're not alone.

Sometimes, Mistress Manners thinks this very truism about relationships is the reason that married people stay married: The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know. This is not to be cynical and trample all over the beating hearts of true love. It's just to say that everything from psychology to astrology to folklore to pheromone research suggests that we have our types, and it is rare for any of us to stray all that far from them. So, while the packaging might look different, we will wind up having similar dynamics and, therefore, the same arguments.

If you're getting tired, then maybe you are onto something. It has been said that, if you want to change your pattern, the first step is to recognize that it is a pattern. Most people don't want to look at patterns and, like you, go through the same arguments over and over. But where you are different is in your willingness to see that this is what is happening.

Now, Mistress Manners is not a professional therapist and can't tell you what technique to use to change your own pattern; but, I can tell you that you are on the right track in being aware. I suspect that pretty soon, if it hasn't happened already, you'll be able to spot your type from a kilometre away. You'll know him by his natural habitat, his natural way of being and your natural chemistry and attraction. And that's when the balance shifts in your favour. Once you identify him, you can avoid him.

Avoidance will only take you so far. You need to reprogram yourself and that takes time, effort and willingness on your part. You might be tired of the same arguments; but can you live without the good stuff?

The key to remember here is that you can only change yourself and most of us are already too set in our ways to change much. Uplifting column this month, or what? Let me leave you with the silver lining. Deepak Chopra's work addresses the human body, mind and spirit, and he is a firm believer in our capacity to change. Why? Because the cells in our bodies regenerate themselves every three months. In other words, physiologically, it's all a process. And if that's true for our bodies, why not also that part of ourselves that's tired of having the same arguments over and over?

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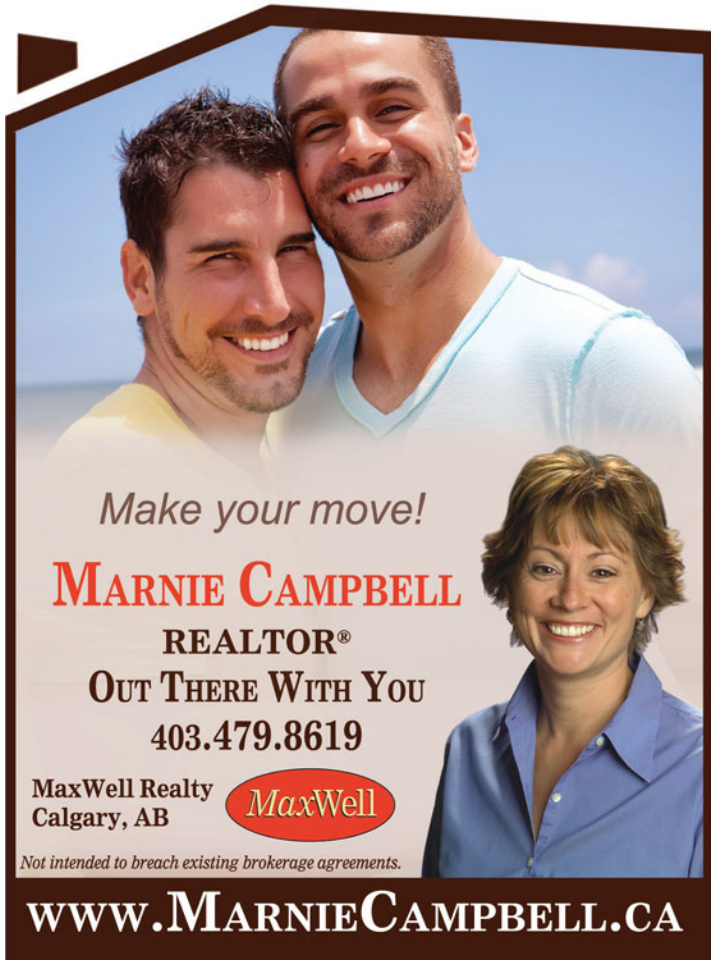
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Not That Kind of Girl

~ METTE BACH

SINGLE LADIES

This summer, I went to Denmark to visit my grandmother and the rest of the family. Normally, when I visit my grandmother, I stay with her; but she is 94 now and self-conscious about using a walker. Plus, she told me she has to pee several times a night and didn't want to wake me (as if she could—I sleep like a bear in winter). I respected her desires and stayed with other relatives and visited her during the day instead. After about a week, she said she was glad I was there, but sad that we hadn't had our usual girl talk. There's just something about a sleepover, I guess. My grandmother and I have had our best conversations in our nightgowns after the dishes were done and put away. I missed those talks, too. Lunch is just not the same.

So I reassured her that none of her new habits could possibly bother me, came over with a suitcase and started to set up. I folded out the legs of her antique hide-a-bed. Incorrigibly the perfect hostess, she came rushing over to stop me. Even on her walker, she is speedy.

"What are you doing? Let me do that," she said, bending down to try to adjust the very stiff, squeaky couch.

It took a lot of effort, but I was eventually able to convince her to let me do the stuff she really shouldn't. Before long, she got into it and asked me to rearrange the top shelves in her kitchen that have been bugging her.

She has a couple of home care workers who come and see her every other week to make sure that her bathroom is scrubbed and her living room is vacuumed; but she can't get herself to ask them to do the stuff she considers private. She'd rather make them a cup of coffee and have a chat about current events or political trends or hear about where they're from.

My grandmother grew into her singleness after she became a widow in 1974.

"The first ten years were the hardest," she told me, "Everyone wanted to know why I didn't meet someone new—why I didn't want a man in my life." She sipped her coffee and took a bite of pastry.

It has taken me a long time to come to a similar conclusion as hers—that the single lifestyle is the best one for me. Thankfully, I have the perfect role model. My grandmother has been single for nearly four decades and she enjoys her life. While mostly everyone else in my family is monogamously coupled and mostly married, she has stayed true to her one-bedroom apartment.

"Why would I want a man in my life?" She chuckled, "I mean, if I needed someone to hang pictures for me or wash my windows, I could ask one of my sons or grandsons or a boy from the neighbourhood. There's no sense in keeping someone around, putting up with all their flaws and making dinner for them every night just to get the odd home improvement job done once in a while."

She told me that most women in her generation didn't understand her and didn't know what to do with themselves if they were alone. "Would you believe that some women don't think that it's okay for them to go to the movies alone?" She asked, incredulous. "And a lot of women, once they become widowed, just eat toast for dinner. Me, I eat my favourite meals every day. Why shouldn't I?"

My grandfather died before I was born and, although I would have liked to have known him, and I heard stories about how funny and warm he was, my grandmother gave me a different gift by being single. From as far back as I can remember, she showed me that living a single life as a woman was something to be proud of, not something to pity. She traveled the world and saw things and tried food and talked to people that no one in her home town knew anything about. She read newspapers every day and even today is still on top of the latest documentaries and films. She joined her strata council and was elected president by all of her neighbours. She went on retreats where she took part in theatre productions. She went to museums and for long walks. And, as she said, "I had a chance to get to know every single one of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren on a one-to-one basis. How many people get to do that?"

It's funny how family can trigger us in so many different ways. Before I moved over to my grandmother's apartment, I found myself answering a lot of the questions she had to answer. When was I going to get married and have kids? Why wasn't there anyone serious in my life? Didn't I want more for myself than a cat and a bachelor suite apartment?

Now and then, I found myself frustrated, like my answers weren't being heard; but I knew that I was there for only a short while and would soon go back to said cat and apartment where no one would ask those questions. It was easy enough to change the topic.

But it wasn't until after I spent some time with my grandmother that it occurred to me that I really ought not change the topic. What I needed to do—and what I did do—was handle it as she did. Face things head on. I had to be honest. So I told them, as my grandmother had, that I had loved hard and loved well and that I savour a lot of wonderful memories. But, as far as where my life is right now, I have other priorities. So, in short, why am I not married with kids? Because I don't want to be.

But I don't need their pity or anybody else's. After all, I have a grandmother who is very proud of me. O

Mette Bach is the author of *Off The Highway*. **www.newstarbooks.com**.

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SIAP UPSIDE THE HEAD

~ MARK FROM SLAP

"Homosexual orientation is one of many weaknesses affecting humanity."

"**This is** no different than for other life-controlling problems, such as alcoholism."

These are just a few of the statements found in a nearly 7000-word article entitled, "Common Questions About Homosexuality." I happened upon it while on the website of Exodus Global Alliance, a religious organization based out of the United States. "Happened upon" might not be the best phrase, mind you. The article is the first and most prominent recommendation on their home page.

As I read through paragraph after paragraph of pseudo-scientific nonsense, I was struck by the sheer audacity of it. The ideas in the article haven't held traction in the scientific and medical community for nearly four decades. Each of the world's most respected medical societies—including The American Medical Association, The American Psychological Association, and The American Psychiatric Association—have gone on record to state that sexual orientation is not a disorder; that it's unchangeable; and that any attempts to change it often result in demonstrable psychological harm. By the time I reached the end of the article, I was offered a small explanation as to how the author was able to get away with simply ignoring the findings of the entire medical community. "Copyright (c) 1993. Church of the Savior, Singapore," it says.

I'm not surprised that Exodus so prominently publishes an article written two decades ago by a church on the other side of the world as if it were relevant. It's all they have left to go on, after all. Homosexuality hasn't been considered a disorder in academia since the early 1970s, and the biological links are now so well documented that controversy about its designation is now the exclusive domain of religious and religiously-motivated political organizations.

Exodus Global Alliance is one of these organizations. Its "Love Won Out" conferences, held multiple times yearly throughout the US and Canada is essential to the lobbying efforts of its sister society, Focus on the Family. Exodus, who claims to offer "freedom from homosexuality" through a combination of prayer and something it calls, "sexual reorientation therapy," is Focus' last bastion of hope when it comes to anti-gay politics. After all, if sexual orientation is treatable, then there's really no such thing as a gay person—just a straight person caught in sin. And straight people in sexual sin don't need equal rights protection.

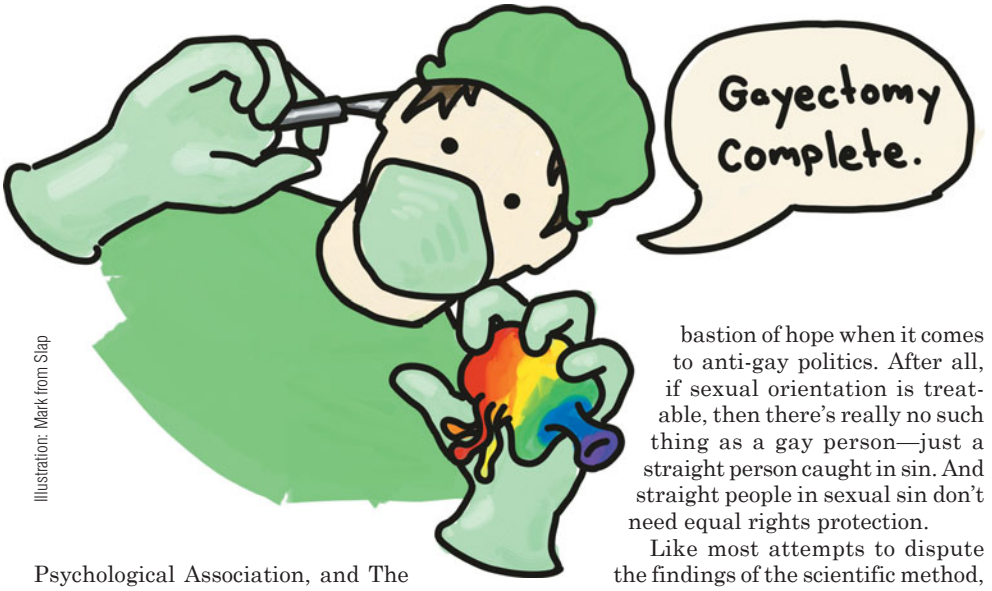

Illustration: Mark from Slap

Like most attempts to dispute the findings of the scientific method, Exodus' strategy is failing. Its most recent blow came out of New Zealand in late August. Exodus Global Alliance's New Zealand affiliate, Exodus Ministries Trust Board, was stripped of its registered charitable status in the country. No longer could it promote its unscientific ideas and offer dangerous "sexual reorientation therapy" as a charity with any of the numerous tax benefits that would normally entail. Simply put, since homosexuality isn't a disorder, curing gays isn't a charitable activity.

This, of course, piqued my curiosity. Was Exodus trying to pass itself off as a charity in Canada? Surely, Canada wouldn't be aiding, with tax benefits, a dangerous and unscientific organization in doing demonstrable psychological harm. Alas, the answer from the Canada Revenue Agency's database of charities sealed it: Exodus Global Alliance, Registration Number 873491849RR0001, Charity Status: Registered.

The Canada Revenue Agency has always had some pretty stringent requirements at to what qualifies as a charitable activity in Canada. Primarily, the charity must provide what's called a "public benefit," which must be "regarded as valuable by the common understanding of enlightened opinion" and "must be weighed against any harm that may arise from the proposed activity and a net benefit must result." So how was Exodus awarded charitable status in the first place? Did the CRA really think that "proclaiming freedom from homosexuality" through prayer and unscientific "sexual reorientation therapy" counts as a public benefit?

Here's how Exodus describes its charitable activities on its tax returns, which are publicly available through the CRA's online database:

EDUCATING AND TRAINING IN DEALING WITH ABUSE AND FAMILY ISSUES. DEVELOPING MINISTRIES TO HELP FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN PAIN. TEACHING CHURCH GROUPS, SCHOOLS AND YOUTH. HELPING AND TEACHING AT CONFERENCES.

Not quite as upfront as its website, is it? Of course, just because Exodus hasn't been very forthcoming to the CRA about what its charity is actually all about, doesn't mean that we can't be. Listed on **www.slapupsidethehead.com/action/** are several contact points at the CRA and a form letter which you may use to send your concerns. With enough voices, backed by metric boatloads of scientific evidence that Exodus doesn't even try to refute when at its most upfront, I have a feeling the CRA will look into whether curing gays really meets its criteria for public benefit in Canada. O

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~ DAVID KING

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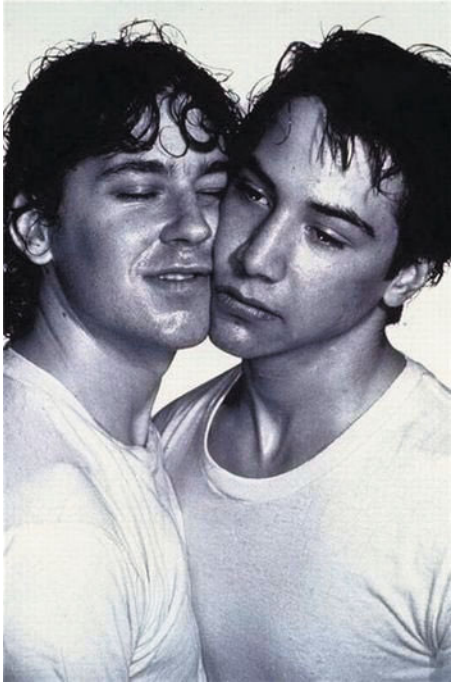
Brad Fraser returns to *Metropolis*



Wolfboy - Keanu early 80s

It was 1984 when an unknown Keanu Reeves took the stage in one of writer/director Brad Fraser's first plays, *Wolfboy*. The story, revolving around two teenagers in a psych ward, introduced a soon-to-be recurring, queer character named "David," just prior to a contemporary theatre era that many arts academics have now labeled the "In Yer Face" theatre of the 1990s.

Recently sharing images of Reeves from *Wolfboy* (the production stills often wrongly circulate as tabloid-style "evidence" that Reeves is gay), the highly approachable, Facebook-friendly Fraser of 2010 often makes me forget that he was crowned Canada's "Bad Boy Playwright" in the 1990s. It was a title then fabricated by the media to diffuse the subversive queer work of out, queer artists like Sky Gilbert, Daniel MacIvor and Bryden MacDonald. But then, it was the decade when *Wolfboy's* "David" truly resurfaced as an Edmonton waiter, in one of most internationally produced plays to date: *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love*.

Raised on his grandparents' Gainfield, Alberta farm and moving from town to town with a father in road construction, Fraser admits the initial experience of *Wolfboy's* big city, Toronto premiere left him running back to Alberta in the late 1980s. Unlike his bad boy compatriots, Fraser set *Human Remains* in Edmonton in his own, real-life locales, at a time when queer characters usually got their start in Toronto at the hub of queer theatre, Buddies in Bad Times.

"When I was in my twenties and early thirties," reflects Fraser, "I was so clear on specific places and restaurants and apartments, because I felt Canada got shortchanged, and that people were so ignorant about Canada. But, as I've matured and travelled, listening to English actors trying to do laughable Canadian accents, it started to get in the way of the play, limiting casting and even the audience that would come out for it".

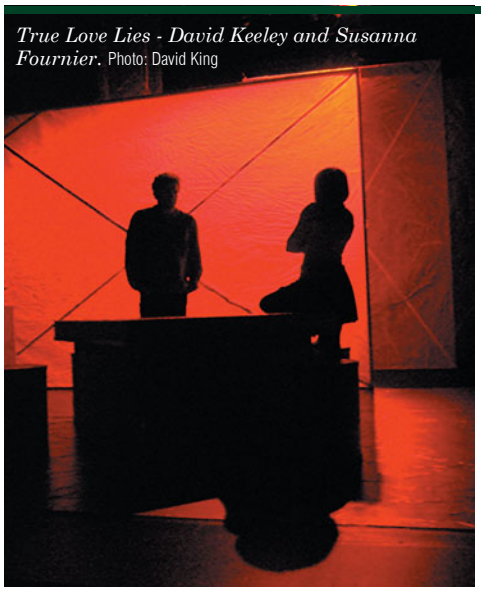
Despite the uproar that *Human Remains* would face (and boy, was there an uproar), it was Alberta Theatre Projects that premiered the play in 1989—its unabashedly queer-positive characters a refreshing slice of real life. On the sidelines, Fraser watched the controversies that unfolded coast-to-coast, continent-to-continent, and from one language to another. As if a mirror to "David" (who again resurfaces in the AIDS-plagued climate of 1994's *Poor Superman*), Fraser was always well-aware he had nothing to fear by simply being bold. After all, he grew up taking refuge in comic books.

"I never fit in with the comic crowd," says Fraser. "The geeks were afraid of me, and I never lived in the same house until the ninth grade. For about ten years, I'd come home and we'd be packed and ready to go on to another town. I never had that comfort of geography, so pop culture became my geography. I mean, no matter where we moved, I could always find a copy of *Superman* or see *Bewitched*."

Donning his own cape, the mighty Fraser has always taken on controversy over his words. One

The Ugly Man. Entire cast. Edmonton 1991. Shawn Johnson, Kate Newby, Jill Dyck, Kate Ryan, Howard Kruschke, Michael Spencer Davis, Jeffrey Hirschfield.

Entire cast, Remains Edmonton, 1990



True Love Lies - David Keeley and Susanna Fournier. Photo: David King

only has to look at his love-hate relationship with critics to see how risk-taking can be simultaneously praised and condemned in one stroke of the pen.

"What I've noticed," observes Fraser of his critics, "is that the same people today that said *Human Remains* was 'rude,' or 'has no place in theatre,' are the same people who continue to dislike the work. They said, 'We know who the serial killer is right away' in *Human Remains*, but for me, that was the whole point."

Human Remains and *Poor Superman* were rated by *Time* as one of the top ten plays of the year, and carried enough cinematic appeal to create the Denis Arcand-directed film *Love and Human Remains* and Fraser's own follow-up direction on *Leaving Metropolis*. The Arcand direction, Fraser observes, was "a little more Michel Tremblay than Brad Fraser" in its cultural shift to a Québec aesthetic, and it's a remark that comes as no surprise from an artist who often directs the second mainstage productions of his own work.

"I'm judicious about my stuff," notes Fraser, who now flies to the UK regularly for his world premieres at the Royal Exchange. "I will direct my own, simply because I see others who don't get it, and I particularly like to have the second production in Canada. For the first production, you have to be the playwright, to fix things, to see things in a way that you can't when you're directing. Directing is such an incredibly hard, demanding job. When I'm writing I'm seeing the design—all that stuff. But with directing, it's time- and energy-consuming, and you don't know what you're getting at the end."

Always conscious of media and medium, Fraser's simply challenged them over years as play, screen, television and columnist writer himself. After writing for Disney and three seasons of *Queer As Folk*, he's dabbled with everything from LA style team writing to Broadway, film and TV negotiations, whisking off to Europe in between for some play development and (somehow) finding comfort with Toronto as a home base. The former host of his own politically incorrect, pundit panel on TV's *Jawbreaker*, he's now hit 50, and after a tough battle with spinal stenosis, Fraser admits "there's something about the aging process that makes you less interested in the limelight."

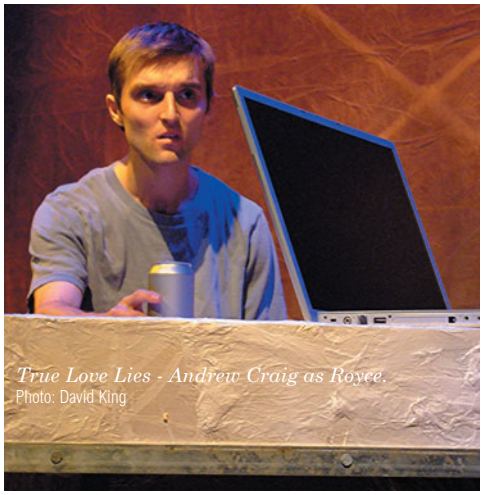
The same may not be said for "David," who returns to the Alberta stage this theatre season in *True Love Lies*, perhaps the closest follow-up to *Human Remains* yet. The play, which reunites David with the puppy-eyed busboy Kane of *Human Remains*, is at once another mirror to Fraser's own topical realities and maturity. He admits it was almost a "slave-ish" *Human Remains* sequel; but, after a couple of drafts and some dramaturgy with [play development] colleague Iris Turcotte, things changed direction.

"If they are vivid, well-realized characters," stresses Fraser, "they take on a life of their own."

True Love Lies has already premiered elsewhere in Canada, the US, the UK, and soon in Germany. Although the Alberta premiere will be a homecoming for Fraser after a long absence, he's almost too busy to notice these days. Instead, he's focused on the development of a TV series for the Space Channel. Returning to the topic of super-heroes, I ask him what he thinks of the new, Angelina Jolie-like redesign of Wonder Woman. After all, the Fraser has never really left the farmhouse.

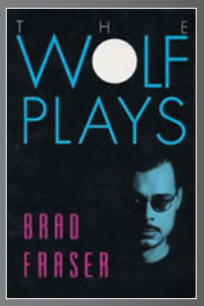
"I could see Angelina Jolie playing Wonder Woman," defends Fraser. "It's a notoriously difficult bondage book character, and you know, originally, she's made out of mud anyway. Real Amazons would be fat, with one tit." O

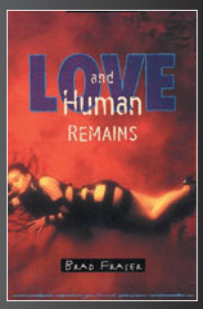
For more information on Fraser, visit **bradfraser.com**. *True Love Lies* makes its Alberta debut at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre, April 23 to May 15, 2011. For tickets, visit **citadeltheatre.com**.

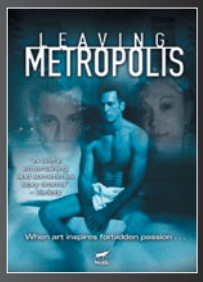


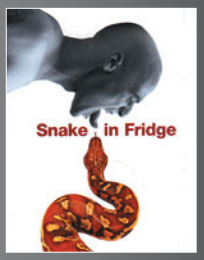
True Love Lies - Andrew Craig as Royce. Photo: David King

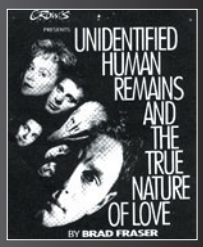
True Love Lies - David Keeley and Susanna Fournier. Photo: David King

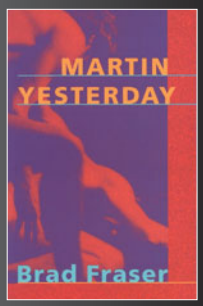


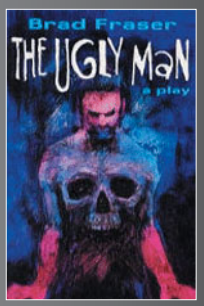


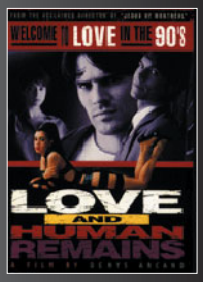


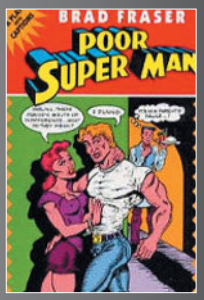












~ BRYEN DUNN

Curious About George

Husband. Father. Gay. Mayor?

George Smitherman, a lifetime Toronto resident, has been working in either business or politics for most of his adult life. He's currently one of the forerunners vying for the position as Mayor of Toronto. Winnipeg had Glen Murray; so, will Canada's largest metropolis be the next to have an openly gay politician lead us into the next decade?

OUTLOOKS chatted with Mr. George Smitherman to find out more about his goals and ambitions for Toronto. First off, he thinks Toronto is tougher on itself than it needs to be, and doesn't project a powerful enough image to the world. "We often run ourselves down, saying that we are broke and bankrupt, and my number one promise if elected is to change this way of thinking by restoring fiscal credibility," he promises.

In terms of his vision for Toronto, Smitherman would like to see the municipal government work within its available resources, by conducting a thorough review of all current expenses and revenues. This would include an immediate hiring freeze, and no tax increases or new spending authorizations for the calendar year 2011.

As a member of the LGBT community, Smitherman comments, "I believe this demographic isn't much different than the population in general, and, therefore, doesn't really have a gay agenda as part of his platform. Ward 27, which encompasses Toronto's Church-Wellesley gay village area, has several open LGBT candidates in the running for that City Councilor position. If elected Mayor, he stated he knows each of the candidates well and wouldn't have an issue working with any of them; however he did make it known that his choice candidate is Ken Chan.

One topic that did create a bit of concern for Smitherman is the current relationship with the Toronto Police Services, even beyond the recent G20 situation. "I feel that, despite the efforts put forth, homophobia is still prevalent," he states. "Developing and maintaining sensitivity to all diverse communities remain an ongoing struggle," he surmises.

As for his thoughts on social media and youth interests, Smitherman believes this to be a key factor for primary engagement. He claims that, in order to achieve greater voter turnout, especially among the younger population, there has to be a reason to get involved. "I promise to introduce policies within various business and arts sectors that will include youth employment components," he says.

In addition, he also envisions an improvement on outgoing Mayor David Miller's commitment to arts and culture funding overall, and would like to include film and television within this sector. He sees this area as having great city-wide growth potential for both job creation and the local economy.

The next Mayor will have to be ready for the world spotlight as well, as Toronto gears up for the 2015 Pan American Games. Smitherman sees this as a form of boot camp that will act as a launch for building Toronto's brand and image. "It will show the best of our city, our people, and our infrastructure," he believes.

Asked who motivates him in various aspects of his life, he claims former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau as his political hero. He also cites Wallace McCain, co-founder of McCain Foods Limited, as his business mentor, and his grandmother as his foundation in life.

As if trying to win over the votes of Torontonians was not enough, he's also in the final stages of adopting his first child with his husband Christopher Peloso. The family resides in downtown Toronto, which has been home for more than twenty years. Prior to holding elected office, including a stint as the chief of staff to former Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall, he owned and operated his own retail business.

The slogan on Smitherman's website states Make Toronto Proud. Again—Proud being a well-known gay motto. Whether one's sexuality has any determination on being elected or not these days, his website states that he has the experience, energy, ideas and values that are needed. The race is on! O

More info: **www.georgesmitherman.com**

Keith Cole "Get Over It"

There's one other openly gay individual running for Mayor of Toronto. Long-time arts and cycling advocate, renowned performer and host, and good friend to many—Keith Cole made his aspirations known right at the onset after the application process began. His outrageous campaign trail has included a diaper toss, flash mobs, and multi-media showcases. In fact, he made his official announcement during one of his monthly art mash-ups: The Keith Cole Experience.

Whether running around town in a hurry or in heels, Cole has a mission to fulfill, and that's to introduce some fun into the otherwise staid and stuffy boardrooms of City Hall.

More info: **www.keithcole.ca**.

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Where's YOUR Favourite Gay Destination?

Don't forget to tell us about your favourite gay travel destinations in the 50 Gayest Places survey—the results of this unique survey will be released next December in *OUTLOOKS*' double edition. You'll see this graphic at **www.outlooks.ca**. Click it to go to the survey.

50 GAYEST travel destinations experiences

Thoughts from the Hill

~ DALE SMITH

At the International AIDS Conference in Vienna, the Canadian government announced that it would be redistributing the funds for the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative toward coordinating basic research and strengthening clinical trials largely in developing countries, after it opted not to build a vaccine production facility in Canada.

This month's question: Do you agree with this decision, and if not, how would you have preferred the funds be spent?

NDP MP Bill Siksay (Burnaby-Douglas, BC): I'm frustrated that here we are, still talking about money that was committed at least four years ago, if not earlier than that. And it's still being moved around from place to place rather than being put into important work to deal with HIV/AIDS in Canada and around the world. This money was originally announced in 2006, and four years later, it still hasn't been put into action. That's a very crucial thing. The Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS—that's where [some of] the money came from—needs to go back into that fund. There are many things that program was working on—prevention, education, research and treatment—and I think that the federal government would be wise to look at Canadian initiatives around treatment. For instance, the work of Dr. Julio Montanner and his team is showing great prospect, and there are places in Canada that would strongly benefit from that kind of approach. Hopefully, the federal government can be persuaded to support more strongly the work of Canadians in that area, and particularly that research.

Liberal MP Scott Brison (Kings-Hants, Nova Scotia): The Conservatives have been playing a shell game with HIV/AIDS funding that is hurting everyone involved. For years, the same money has simply been announced, reallocated and then reannounced, without ever getting to the people on the ground who can make a difference in terms of prevention or treatment.

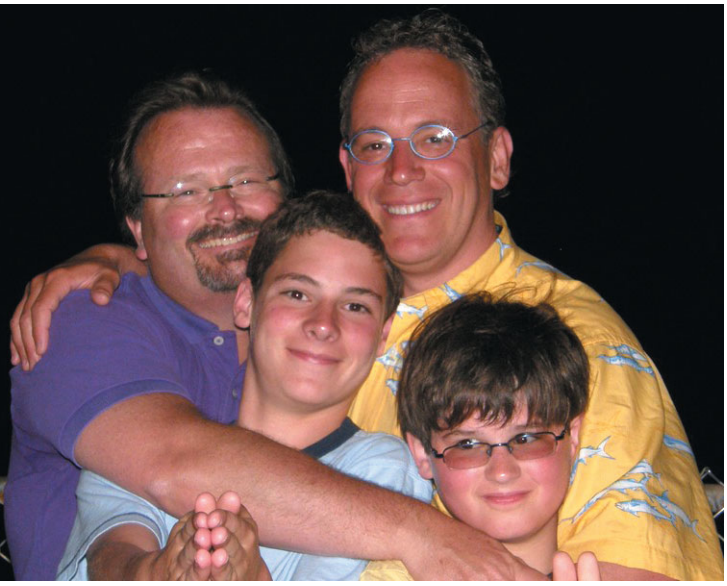
First, the Conservatives announced money for HIV/AIDS community programs here in Canada. Then, these same community programs were cut before the money could be spent in order to redirect the funds to the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative. This was done, even though the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative was receiving financial support from the Gates Foundation on the condition that government funding would only come from new funding sources, and not from other HIV/AIDS programs. So, the Conservatives violated their own agreement. They did that by cutting previously announced funding for community programs in HIV/AIDS prevention and support for Persons With AIDS to live in dignity. In too many communities in Canada, this meant laying-off staff who were dedicated to HIV prevention programs, or ending services for HIV positive Canadians.

Then, earlier this year, the government changed its mind about the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative and promised to consult with the community about how to reallocate its funding. But almost six months after the government announced this reversal on the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative, the Conservatives went ahead and made the announcement at the International AIDS Conference in Vienna without consulting the stakeholders and experts in the field.

The Conservatives have mismanaged the issue of HIV/AIDS from the beginning. Going forward, they need to reinstate the funding that was originally taken from Canadian HIV initiatives. This money must be returned to the front-line workers and patients. As well, the government must make sure that all of its funding decisions are based on science and not ideology. This means funding prevention programs that provide access to family planning - including contraception. This also means supporting programs that recognize that harm reduction is an essential pillar of fighting AIDS. The Conservatives refused to sign the Vienna Convention because it called for harm reduction policies with respect to drug use. These ideological positions do nothing in terms of education or preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth was unable to reply this month. o

And Baby makes three…or four…or five



Weltman family

"We were one of the first gay couples to do surrogacy in America," recalls lawyer John Weltman, who went on to found Circle Surrogacy, the longest running gay-owned surrogacy agency in the States. "Our boys are now 16 and 15. Surrogacy was challenging and rewarding. The first journey took eight tries of insemination and the second worked on the first try."

After representing the surrogacy agency that he used in a lawsuit, Weltman won the case and started getting approached by people looking to start their own families. "A couple offered me $5,000 for finding their surrogate and helping with the legal work. I agreed, and 11 months later, their son was born. They invited me to their house for a circumcision in which the child was passed up the family line to me as a way of thanking me for helping them have a family. I was deeply touched by the experience. My whole life, I had helped companies fight litigation battles. For the first time, I had helped create a family. I decided to start the business then."

Since then, Circle Surrogacy has helped give birth to babies for hundreds of gay couples. "For gay couples, surrogacy is really ideal," explains Weltman. "They can have a biologically related child, or two children genetically related to each other through the egg donor that has two different dads. They know all of the genetic components that went into the mix and they can be part of the process and be legally secure in both being dads."

Thirty-one-year-old lawyer Graham Lee and 36-year-old physician Manuel Eskildsen have been together for ten years and used Circle Surrogacy to start their family.

"Surrogacy was attractive to us because it allowed us to have a biological link to our children, which has been a special and humbling experience," says Lee.

Lee and Eskildsen now have 5-year-old twin boys, who were carried for them by a surrogate. "Our carrier was a married mother of two, who had also carried twins for a gay couple before. She saw surrogacy as a way to help people who could not otherwise have their own children. After we all learned about each other, we made the commitment to move forward. It was exciting and nerve-wracking all at the same time.

"Surrogacy has many components, which, when all added up, can be quite costly," explains Lee. "There is the agency fee, together with legal fees, reimbursement for expenses for the egg donor and gestational carrier, fees to the fertility clinic, doctor's visits, costs associated with the birth, and travel. When all is said and done, one could expect to spend US$50,000-$100,000 on the process. We used a good portion of the equity from our home to finance the process, and we would absolutely do it again.

"Holding the boys for the first time was such a happy and beautiful moment. Granted, the first year was a blur of diaper changing, bottles and sleepless nights. But as the boys have grown, it has been amazing to watch them develop into little men. We take pains to have open communication in our house and speak honestly and frankly with our children. The few times it has come up, we have said that they grew in a nice lady's tummy, and when it was time for them to come out, Daddy and Papi were there waiting for them. At age five, this is really all the information they are ready to digest. When they are older, we will tell them the full story of their surrogacy."

Lori Tyler is a 35-year-old lesbian who has acted as a surrogate twice for couples in the UK. With three children of her own and a supportive partner, Tyler decided to become a surrogate. "I thought it would be a great way to help out by being able to carry a child for someone. I have always had very easy pregnancies.

"I have done it twice," recalls Tyler, "both for gay couples in London. I received a fee of $20,000 the first time and $25,000 the second time. The conception was very different. It was basically me going into a room where they transferred an embryo into me. It was pain free; in fact, you don't feel a thing. The pregnancy and birth were just like any other. I did have to take injections and meds to stop my body from producing its own eggs and prepare my body for an embryo transfer. The best part, by far, is seeing the love and joy in their faces as their baby comes into the world, and also knowing that you helped create a family that otherwise might not happen."

In Canada, surrogacy is not as simple as in the United States. In 2004, the federal government enacted legislation called the Assisted Human Reproduction Act (AHR Act). According to Assisted Human Reproduction Canada (AHRC), which is responsible for compliance and enforcement of the law, "The Act prohibits the purchase, offer to purchase and advertisement for the purchase of sperm and ova, and the purchase, sale or advertisement of in vitro embryos and the payment, offer of payment and the advertisement of payment to a surrogate mother."

"Holding the boys for the first time was such a happy and beautiful moment. Granted, the first year was a blur of diaper changing, bottles and sleepless nights."

Weltman has Canadian clients looking to bypass the complexities of the Canadian system. "I think Canada's Assisted Human Reproduction Act effectively makes compensated surrogacy illegal. As a result, Canadians really need to come to the US to do surrogacy; otherwise, they are risking that the surrogate could change her mind and keep the child. That is too great a risk to consider," says Weltman.

University of Manitoba law professor Karen Busby, who just published a paper on surrogacy for the Canadian Journal of Family Law, explains, "Three interrelated rationales are given for prohibiting commercial surrogacy arrangements in Canada: A surrogate mother cannot give meaningful consent prior to delivery and, therefore, the contracts could be unconscionable; the potential for exploitation of surrogate mothers is so significant that the contracts must be unenforceable and discouraged; and the payment of money for reproductive services commodifies women and children, and is, therefore, contrary to human dignity."

According to AHRC, "The prohibitions are based on views—expressed by Canadians during consultations leading up to the development of the AHR Act—that commercializing the human reproductive capability is not in keeping with their values."

A 1991 Royal Commission was responsible for the findings that led to the AHR Act. According to BC lawyer Larry Khan, who has been doing surrogacy contracts for the last 28 years—longer than anyone else in Canada—those findings are outdated. "The Act is in a social quandary. Since the Royal Commission in 1991, times have changed. We have a kinder, gentler society. Views have evolved and so should social policy. It doesn't reflect what society wants. The act is wrong and has been poorly thought out in this time and age."

In her paper, Busby concludes, "Canadian governments should replace a criminal prohibition against commercial surrogacy arrangements with a regulatory regime that minimizes the potential for exploitation and commodification. By failing to accommodate the highly individualist and interpersonal nature of surrogacy arrangements, the current criminal law regime simultaneously denies women personal autonomy and exacerbates the potential for their exploitation."

So far, no one in Canada has been prosecuted for violating the AHR Act. In June, 2008, a Quebec Court of Appeal decision ruled that certain provisions of the Act are unconstitutional. In August of 2008, the Attorney General of Canada brought an appeal before the Supreme Court of Canada. The hearing took place in April, 2009, and no opinion has been provided to date.

So, where does this leave gay Canadian couples who are trying to start families of their own? Surrogacy is still happening and, as long as money paid to surrogates is for expenses with receipts, it is acceptable under the Act.

"Padding in terms of allowances made for expenses are generous, but not unreasonable. People ere on the side of generosity," explains Khan. "If you think about $18,000 in expenses over a ten-month period, it's not a significant amount of money."

Weltman echoes the view, "As one surrogate said, it is about $2/hour for a nine-month journey—clearly not a highly compensated job."

The restrictions of the Act have left surrogacy arrangements in Canada somewhat in the shadows. What is happening officially may not be the whole truth in many cases. "I can be told, 'we agreed to give $50,000'" says Khan. "Do I believe all my clients? Absolutely not. They will do what they want and they will never tell me about it." After decades of dealing with Surrogacy contracts and law, Khan is clear, "If I had my way, I would just allow surrogacy carte blanche."

Jacob Johnson is a 33-year-old manager of a tattoo/piercing store in Vancouver. He and his partner have been exploring surrogacy as an option to continue growing their family.

"I have wanted children since I was a teenager," says Johnson. "I have done some work in youth social work, adopted a child, and I have foster children. Unfortunately, this hasn't satisfied my strong desire to have a child that is genetically related to me.

"I never thought of surrogacy until my mother brought it up. She had offered to be a surrogate for her sister when they were younger. She said she would gladly do it for me, if she were still able. I've checked lots of agency websites, the price seems awfully high, considering that they don't guarantee to find you a suitable surrogate. If I had the extra money to pay the fee, I would gladly take the help; but I need to save for the procedure and the surrogate expenses. I am not a rich man at all."

Discouraged by agency fees, Johnson has turned to online surrogacy forums. "So far the experience has been very discouraging. The only women who have shown interest are foreigners who are looking to make a lot of money. I guess I was hoping there were more people who might want to help, out of the goodness of their heart; but that hasn't been the case so far."

When asked how he feels as a Canadian gay man trying to start a family in light of the AHR Act, Johnson says, "I understand that they are trying to protect people; but I wish they would make it a little easier for us to start a family this way." O

The Armageddon Factor Author Warns Against Complacency

Marci McDonald's book about the rise of the religious right in Canada, *The Armageddon Factor*, was, in many ways, intended as a warning—and a wake-up call for Canadians who think that what happened with the religious right in America could never happen in Canada.

"I think that apathy is the great enemy of democracy," McDonald says. "People do not want to be engaged these days unless they're being pandered to on the most simplistic level."

Having witnessed what happened in the United States, McDonald says people only paid attention once the religious right was entrenched and they saw headlines that Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition had orchestrated these massive congressional gains.

"The problem is that we wake up too late, and part of that may be the hindrance of our media," McDonald says. With mainstream media bureaux in Ottawa already overworked and with no one on a religious beat, socially conservative religious groups have made inroads in Canadian politics without anyone noticing.

It didn't help that much of the fostering of these inroads was done quietly, under one of the most secretive governments in recent memory.

The book evolved out of an article that McDonald had written for *The Walrus* magazine in 2006. While that article had been well-received, especially by many of the religious groups that had been profiled, this changed by the time McDonald was researching the book.

"When I was doing the book, they were much more reticent," she says. Prominent evangelical leader Charles McVety refused to cooperate, and faith leader Faytene Kryskow stopped in the middle of an interview, after being warned by someone who used to work in Prime Minister Harper's office, McDonald recounts in the book.

"I kept saying that it's better that you help shape the story," McDonald says, after several groups complained about their portrayal, claiming she didn't attempt to contact them, although McDonald has proof otherwise.

While those with ties to the government have portrayed McDonald as an anti-Christian bigot—even though she states in the book that she is not an atheist—McDonald largely refrains from editorializing in the book, which ironically earned her criticism from left-leaning publications.

"We don't learn anything from that," she says. "If you don't agree with these groups that you're up against, and if you *do* agree, but only up to a certain extent, you don't understand where their version of Christianity might differ from yours. I thought it was important just to let people have their say. It's a reporting job—not a polemic."

The other goal McDonald had in writing the book was putting the whole of Stephen Harper's otherwise scattershot decisions into context.

"There's been the defunding of the Pride parades and women's groups," McDonald says. "The law and order, the prison building binge—all of it is just catering to this particular constituency."

Much of it dates back to a speech that Harper gave to the annual Civitas conference in June,2003, where he laid out a blueprint for a new conservative coalition, about reaching out to religious and social conservatives across party and faith lines, rather than focusing on economic conservatives.

"If you understand that a lot of his strategy hinges on this 2003 Civitas speech, then you understand more of the logic, where he will move a little here and a little there," McDonald says.

This leads back to her central argument, which is to keep Canadians from sleepwalking into a strong religious right, as which happened in the States.

"Part of it may be that we don't have a way of staying engaged once we think that gains have been won," McDonald says. "It's not just the gay community—which thought it had won the day, and it could relax—and we're seeing, with the fights in California, that it's not true. The gains are by no means won."

The same applies to women's groups, where a generation grew up feeling that gains had been made, only to find that 14 women's groups were defunded under the Harper government. They made maternal and child health promises that did not include access to safe abortions for women in developing countries.

"The only sense of editorializing that I ventured to do was to say that this is—I hope—a wake-up call so that we have a more informed electorate, and people can decide how much religiosity they want in their government," McDonald says of her book.

"How much of the moral questions do they want to debate in the public square? This is a government that has chosen this as a strategy. We must look carefully at it, and if we follow down this road, it's a slippery slope. In 30 years, we could end up the way the United States is." O

Randall on the Road

Favourites? I need your help.

Where's the city, place, or experience that makes the perfect vacation for you, as a gay traveller? What destination do you think offers the "best gay travel experience?"

Before you say "I don't travel gay," please reconsider the question. If you are gay, it's impossible for you not to travel "gay." The question I'm asking is really about what makes the perfect trip for you, a gay traveller.

In the December issue of Outlooks, I'll attempt to answer that question and create a list of the greatest gay travel experiences-both from my own adventures, and from the results of a unique survey that's available right now.

Please take the survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GayTravelSurvey

A handful of people have said "this survey doesn't apply to me, because I don't travel 'that way,'" meaning they think "gay travel" refers to the inaccurate stereotypes of circuit parties, clothing-optional resorts, and gay villages.

While the survey asks about many of those kinds of places, almost every question also gives you the chance to write in your own comments.

I hope you'll help create an interesting snapshot of gay travellers' favourites by spending just a few minutes right now to complete the survey.

Many thanks! Randall Shirley

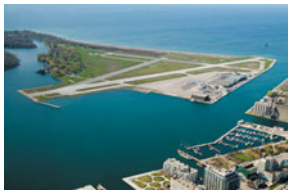
Travel Editor Randall Shirley in one of his favorite gay travel destinations: San Diego, CA. Photo: Kevin Spragg

Gay Palm Springs News

As things cool off in Canada, they heat up in gay-fave resort Palm Springs, California. Goings-on include an overhaul of venerable clothing-optional resort Chestnutz into Escape Palm Springs (www.escapepalmsprings.com). New owners promise the place will be better than ever. Gay events in the desert city start long before the holidays, including Pride (Nov. 6-7, www.pspride.org) and Leather Pride (Nov. 11-14, www.desertleatherpride.com).

Lounging in Toronto

Über-smart Porter Airlines is busily messing with all their competitors' business models along "the corridor" (Windsor to Montréal). While no one's quite sure how Porter keeps their fares so low, they're doing something right. Their success has allowed them to open a brand new, second passenger lounge at the Toronto Island Airport... a spot passengers seem to love. The new lounge includes complimentary Wifi and business workstations equipped with iMac computers. More at www.flyporter.com.



Head to Toronto, see Thompson in Beauty Drag

Kids in the Hall's Scott Thompson will join the 15th Anniversary of the holiday musical production of Beauty and the Beast: The Savagely Silly Family Musical...playing no less than the role Grand Dame. Thompson is no stranger to women's clothing—one of his unforgettable impersonations is Queen Elizabeth II—he takes the role of Beauty's guardian like a mob at the opening of a new Victoria's Secret shop! The show runs Nov. 25 - Jan. 2 at Toronto's gorgeous Elgin Theatre. www.rosspetty.com.

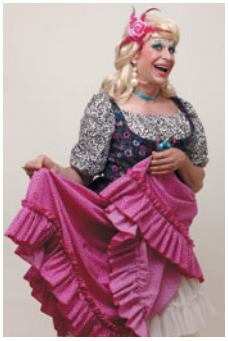


Image: Courtesy Ross Petty Productions

Getting the Cold Shoulder Now More Convenient

Québec City's famous Ice Hotel (Outlooks, Dec. 2009) has been phenomenally popular for the past few years, but its location 40 kilometers outside the city has, frankly, sucked. That changes this winter with a move closer to town. In truth, most of the hotel's business is not with overnight guests, but with daytime visitors who tour the magically beautiful "temporary" building. www.hoteldeglace-canada.com

Photo: Randall Shirley

Canada Gay Travel Conference in Toronto

On November 5 Tourism industry professionals will gather at Toronto's InterContinental Hotel to learn about the latest trends and opportunities in LGBT travel. Presenters and panelists include some of the leading authorities on the LGBT market on topics including marketing, media relations (your Travel Editor among them), distribution channels, product development, and more. Details and registration at www.tgcconference.com.

Cruise Your Own Gay Way

Travel Editor ***Randall Shirley*** *looks at the cruise options available for gay travellers.*

Photo: Randall Shirley

Photo: Randall Shirley

I never imagined I'd reveal the most unusual place I've had sex in front of 800 straight people. And they weren't exactly PFLAG parents. They were fellow passengers on a very mainstream cruise ship.

With the Royal Caribbean cruise director's microphone in my face and the stage lights in my eyes, I found myself saying "the most interesting place I've made whoopee was in the middle of Utah, next to a natural hot spring, in broad daylight, just off the freeway."

I'm sure I heard a groan or two. Few passengers on our Royal Caribbean cruise through the Panama Canal had planned to think about gay sex during the evening's main stage show, *Love & Marriage*. But there's little doubt they all left the theatre with a mental-visual of my partner and me humping like bunnies in the desert.

I'm quite sure they hadn't expected to see two men kiss on stage, either. But they did.

The show was based on the classic *Newlywed Game*. The other two contestant couples were the most recently married (two weeks), and the longest married (57 years). The third couple was chosen by audience popularity. If you wanted to participate, you stood up, did a little dance and shouted, "We want to play this game." We stood up; 10 straight couples stood up. The audience chose the homos.

The whoopee question was certainly the most interesting in the game, and not because of the gay couple's answers. *We* turned out to be pretty tame compared to the newlyweds who had fucked in just about every public and private place they could find—rental cars, his office, her parents' front lawn. Apparently they didn't wait for the wedding night.

Carly, the cruise director on our sailing, later told me that my partner and I were, to her knowledge, the first gay couple to participate so openly on any Royal Caribbean ship.

Dames at sea: all-gay cruises definitely encourage a special level of costume creativity.
Photo: Randall Shirley

Three Ways to Cruise Gay

1. All-gay Itineraries

How it works: A marketing company (Atlantis, RSVP, Olivia) charters an entire ship from a mainstream cruise company. The marketers bring much of their own entertainment, sometimes including "big name" performers like Joan Rivers, Charo, or Debra Cox. They also bring their own sound and light show for nightly poolside dance parties. For those who think it's just a floating bathhouse, I recommend you read: www.meetmeonboard.com/blog/2008/10/myths

Pros: You are totally free to be yourself. Over-the-top costume parties and nightly dance parties "gay it up." If you're looking to meet a special someone or just get laid, the odds are in your favour. Unless you're on Rosie O'Donnell's "R Family" cruises, there should not be children on board.

Cons: Prices tend to be a couple hundred dollars more than similar itineraries on the same ship. But that extra money pays for an all-gay experience, and the specialized entertainment and staff. Compared to mainstream cruising, there are relatively few sailings, thus limiting the number of destinations served.

2. Gay Group Itineraries

How it works: A travel agency books a large number of cabins on a mainstream sailing and markets it under a brand name (Aquafest, Pied Piper, Chumley's Bears). Depending on the size of the gay group, the organizers may bring minimal specialized entertainment and perhaps have exclusive use of a small lounge and dedicated area of the dining room, but gay cruisers will be mixing with mainstream passengers.

Pros: Prices are in line with other mainstream cruises, and right now that means cheap! A number of itineraries are available, and many gay travellers enjoy the opportunity to mix with a group of gays while still being able to mix with straight passengers.

Cons: The number of gay-exclusive events and facilities (compared to all-gay) will be substantially limited or non-existent. There will likely be a number of children on board.

Selected Upcoming Gay & Gay Group Cruises from MeetMeOnBoard.com

December 2010, Caribbean: Pied Piper gay group 15-night holiday cruise on board Queen Mary II, departs NYC.

February 2011, Caribbean: RSVP Vacations all-gay 7 night cruise on board Holland America Nieuw Amsterdam.

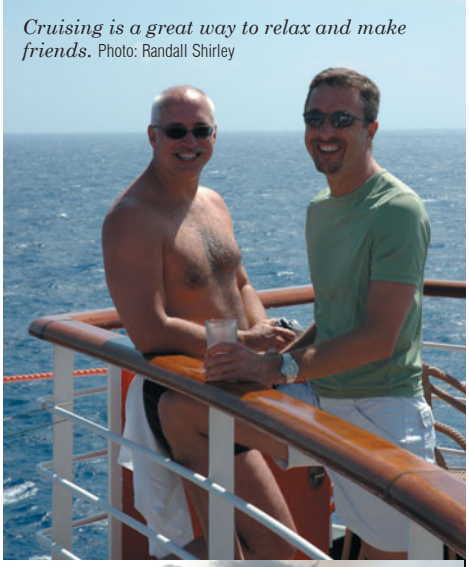
February 2011, South America: Pied Piper gay group 14-night cruise on Celebrity Infinity, departs Buenos Aires.

March 2011, Mexican Riveria: Olivia all-lesbian 7-night cruise on board Holland America Oosterdam, departs San Diego.

April 2011, Nile River Egypt: Aquafest gay-group 7-night cruise on board Farah, departs Cairo.

June 2011, Alaska: Bears at Sea gay-group 7-day cruise on board Diamond Princess, departs Anchorage, ends Vancouver BC.

Visit MeetMeOnBoard.com for a calendar of upcoming gay and gay-group cruises.
**Randall Shirley also writes and edits for MeetMeOnBoard.com.*



Cruising is a great way to relax and make friends. Photo: Randall Shirley

On "all gay" cruises, the entire pool area becomes a nightly party. Photo: Randall Shirley

That cruise was almost six years ago, and lasted a full two-weeks sailing through the Panama Canal between California and Florida. The magic thing about the cruise was it demonstrated the huge shift I believe has occurred during the past decade: gays are generally welcomed by almost every major provider in the travel industry.

We didn't participate openly to make a statement; we did it because we felt so comfortable with the majority of the passengers—and with the group of about 20 other gay men we had become friends with onboard the ship. In many ways, we created our own "gay cruise" experience. Each day we claimed a prime stretch of deck space where we seemed to have our own dedicated cocktail servers (some smart F&B manager had obviously spotted a group of gays who weren't afraid to drink or tip).

Since then, I've asked a handful of people in the cruise business how they would respond if someone complained about gays on board (assuming the gays were acting in ways that would be considered appropriate if straights were doing the same thing). While no one has cited their company policy, they've generally said that they'd remind the complaining guest that all people are welcome on board, and that if the complainer didn't like that, s/he would be welcome to leave the ship at the next port.

To me, this means today's gay & lesbian cruise passengers have a huge number of choices in cruise travel. While all-gay sailings are still phenomenally popular—and with many good reasons—gays sailing independently or as part of small groups on mainstream cruise itineraries feel welcome and can be as "included" as they're willing to let themselves be.

When we sailed with Royal Caribbean, their advertising slogan was "Get Out There." We did as they suggested. I suggest you do the same. O

Key West is one of the planet's most gay-friendly cruise ports. Photo: Randall Shirley

3. Independent Itineraries with other gay passengers

How it works: You choose your own cruise from any itinerary in the world. If you want to connect in advance with other gay passengers who will be on board, you may find them through a service called MeetMeOnBoard.com*. This would allow you to pre-plan dining together and perhaps organize shore excursions. Since not all gay passengers are aware of MeetMeOnBoard.com, you will find additional gay passengers through on-board "Friends of Dorothy" parties. If you don't see one listed on the first day aboard your ship, immediately contact the Cruise Director to get it arranged.

Pros: You are completely independent, and can organize your cruise the way you want. You might even organize a "group cruise" with friends—book enough rooms and you could receive a discount or free cabin (a good cruise agent can help with this).

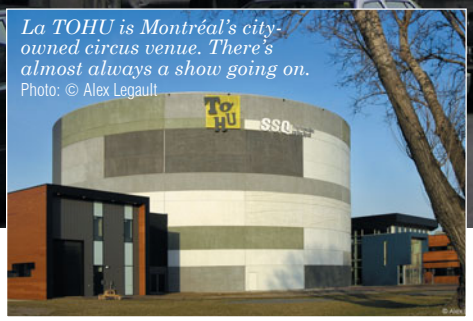
Cons: You might be the only gays on the ship (if it matters)! However, it's highly unlikely on most mid- or large-size ships. There will be no specialized entertainment-you'll have to make your own!

~ RANDALL SHIRLEY

The Perfectly Cool Montréal Weekend

When the weather cools off Montréal just turns up the heat with plenty of things to do. ***Randall Shirley*** *puts together a perfect gay visitor's weekend.*

It's fun to stay at the continent's original YMCA, now the Hotel Gault, in centre of photo.
Photo: Randall Shirley



La TOHU is Montréal's city-owned circus venue. There's almost always a show going on.
Photo: © Alex Legault

Few things rival a horse-drawn carriage ride for Montréal romance.
Photo: © Diane Charron

Spend an afternoon "getting around" on Montréal's marvelous Bixi Bikes.
Photo: © Tourisme Montréal

Thursday

AFTERNOON ARRIVAL. Non-stop flights come to the centre of French Canada from every corner of the country, so you'll have no trouble getting here. You homos in southern Ontario can easily glide into town on VIA Rail.

CHECK IN. Every gay knows it's fun to stay at the YMCA, and **Hotel Gault** occupies the spot where the very first YMCA in North America was organized in 1851. Tucked on a side street in Montréal's "Old Port," (known locally as *Vieux Montréal*), the Gault is a gorgeous boutique property with surprisingly affordable rates. Created from a historic, renovated warehouse, once the centre of a Andrew Gault's Canadian monopoly on the cotton trade, the Gault's exterior only shows five floors—in fact, the hotel has six floors, with the top being "set back" to comply with heritage zoning rules. Rooms on the top floor have fantastic shared balconies and some amazing cityscape views. As with many Montréal experiences, you'll *think* most of the metrosexual staff are gay. I'll leave it to you to confirm who is and isn't!

EVENING. Dinner features duck *foie gras* at smartly continental **Le Local** in the heart of the Old Port. If you're travelling with your partner, a ride in a horse-drawn carriage through the cobbled lanes really is *tres romantique*.

Friday

MORNING. After the hotel's included breakfast, stretch your quads and hamstrings before heading out for a day on **Bixi Bikes** (until Nov. 30, resuming in April 2011). Montréal leads the way in the trend toward public bike systems. Thousands of the unique bikes are locked in racks around the city. A $5.00 swipe of your credit card gets you access for the day, and the first 30 minutes of use is free with every bike. After 30 minutes, you start paying by the half-hour. The system isn't designed for all-day rentals; rather it's designed as a transportation option which encourages people to grab a bike, ride it where they need to go, and lock it back up. Once you've done your business, grab another bike, and ride onward.

AFTERNOON. Lunch is at **Schwartz's Deli**. You've had plenty of exercise (and taken your Lipitor, if required), so order yourself a full smoked meat sandwich and sink your teeth into one of Montréal's most decadent inventions. I recommend the medium-fatty cut. Simply yum.

Pedal to **St-Laurent Boulevard** where locals shop for one-of-a-kind art, furniture, food, and even second-hand duds. There are so many interesting spots along this street (sometimes called "The Main") that locals

have created a website all about it, featuring its many shops and dining choices. For clothes (Montréalers are *always* impeccably dressed), snag some tossed-away threads at second-hand clothes shop Friperie St-Laurent.

EVENING. After a nap at the hotel and early tapas in their restaurant, it's off to a cirque-style performance at Montréal's dazzling public circus facility, **La TOHU**. The cirque genre continually evolves in the city, and there are numerous cirque schools and programs. The explosion of everything-cirque led the city to create La TOHU as a space to showcase local/community and professional circus acts. As amazing as the circus acts is the building itself: clever engineers used recycled building materials, managed to pull "air conditioning" from 325 feet under ground, and suck in excess heat from their industrial neighbor's gas processing facility. Even if you can't see a show there, a daytime tour of La TOHU will dazzle you.

Saturday

MORNING. Sleep in a bit, but not too long or you'll miss the action at **Marché Jean-Talon** in the Little Italy neighbourhood. It's a fave of locals and tourists alike. There is plenty to eat at the market—so plan on a progressive breakfast of crisp Québec apples and fresh baked goods. When you're ready to warm up, stroll over to St-Laurent Boulevard for a cup of coffee at legendary **Café Italia**, thought by many to be the city's best.

AFTERNOON. Head to *Le Village*, the city's gay village, to drop some dollars in the many gay-owned businesses there. Of course **Priape** is a Montréal institution, having started there in 1974. But Le Village includes many other shops to help you spend your money. When you're ready to warm up there are, er, hot tubs at the village's several bathhouses. Many Montréalers have a very relaxed attitude toward sex, and their variety of bathhouses reflect that. If you'd like something a bit tamer but almost as gay-popular, the **Museum of Fine Arts** is a lovely place to explore. It's Canada's oldest art institution, and features a remarkable new permanent gallery devoted to Napoleon and the arts under the First Empire

EVENING. Dinner tonight is in *Le Village*. **David Biron** cooks up quite a meal marrying his expertise in both French and Asian cuisines, and his rechristened restaurant (formerly Duel) is named for the chef himself. After dinner, Montréal's nightlife is yours to discover. For a taste of the city's famous jazz anytime of year, catch a great jazz combo at the sumptuous **House of Jazz**. For something a bit more saucy, dive into one of the strip clubs in Le Village where the guys take it all off—and unlike some other cities there's seldom a cover charge. Campus is always a good bet.

Sunday

MORNING. You'll need to shake that hangover before your afternoon flight home. Grab a cab to **St. Viatuer Bagels** where you'll snag a couple of fresh ones from the world-famous spot. Eat one, but save one to eat once you've completed your brisk walk up "The Mountain," as locals call Mount Royal. Walk down the river side of the mountain, and either cab it or continue walking to your hotel for check out. *Bon voyage*!

The Details (all area code 514)

Sleep:

- In story: **Hotel Gault**, 449 Rue Sainte-Hélène, 904-1616, www.hotelgault.com
- Also suggested: **Opus Montréal**, 10 Sherbrooke O, 843-6000, www.opushotel.com
- **La Loggia Art & Breakfast**, 1637 rue Amherst. 1-866-520-2493. www.laloggia.ca

Eat:

- **Le Local**, 740 Rue William, 397-7737, www.resto-lelocal.com
- **Schwartz's Deli**, 3895 St-Laurent Blvd., 514-842-4813, www.schwartzsdeli.com
- **Biron**, 1429 rue Amherst, 528-1429, www.restaurantbiron.com
- **St. Viateur Bagels**, 263 St. Viateur O., (open 24 hours) www.stviateurbagel.com
- **Café Italia**, 6840 St-Laurent Blvd., 495-0059

Play:

- **General info**: Tourisme Montreal, www.tourisme-montreal.org
- **Marché Jean-Talon**, 7070 rue Henri-Julien, www.marche-jean-talon.com
- **Bixi Bikes**, www.bixi.com
- **St-Laurent Shopping District**, www.boulevardsaintlaurent.com
- **La TOHU Circus Venue**, La TOHU Cirque/Circus Venue, 1-888-376-8648, www.tohu.ca/en
- **House of Jazz**, 2060 Rue Aylmer, 842-8656, www.houseofjazz.ca
- **Campus Strip Club**, 1111 Sainte-Catherine St E, 526-9867, www.campusmtl.com
- **Museum of Fine Arts**, 1380 rue Sherbrooke O, 285-2000, www.mbam.qc.ca
- **Priape**, 1311, rue Ste-Catherine E., 521-8451, www.priape.com

Marche Jean Talon is the place to find maple products.
Photo: Randall Shirley

This plaque at the Hotel Gault marks the spot where North America's 1st YMCA was created.

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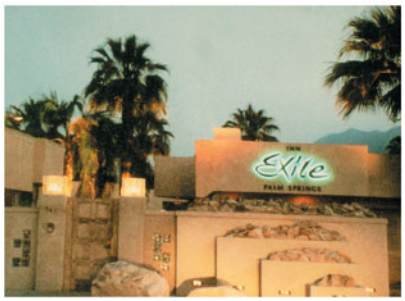

Inn Exile is entirely gated, and located on 2 1/2 acres in a modern Southwest setting. The atmosphere couldn't be more inviting. With 4 Pools, there is a place to splash around everywhere you look. The Billiard Room, The Gang Way, or the Lap Top Lounge are a great way to pass the time with new friends. After your workout in the fully equipped gymnasium, choose one of the Jacuzzis, or perhaps the steam room to relax, recharge, or even invigorate. Days may be spent in the Sun, but the Outdoor Fireplace after Sunset, seems to call to everyone. Remember, at **Inn Exile, clothing is always optional.**

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PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT

the Musical

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE LIMITED PRE-BROADWAY ENGAGEMENT

AT LAST! After smash-hit engagements in Sydney and in London's West End, PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT the Musical rolls into Toronto on October 12.

PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT the Musical had its world premiere in Sydney in 2006 and has subsequently wowed audiences and critics alike in Melbourne and New Zealand, becoming the most successful Australian musical of all time. The London production is now in its second smash hit year in the West End at the Palace Theatre.

Olivier Award nominee Tony Sheldon ("Bernadette", from the London cast), Tony Award® nominee Will Swenson (Hair) and Nick Adams (La Cage aux Folles) will lead the cast of the North American company of PRISCILLA, written by Stephan Elliott and Allan Scott, directed by Simon Phillips and choreographed by Ross Coleman.

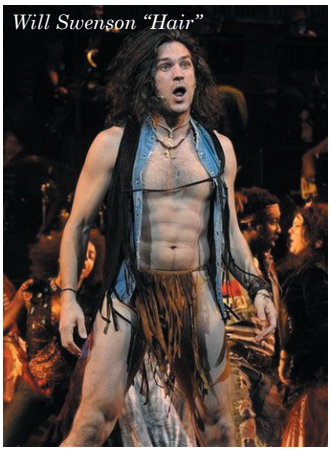
Along with winning the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Costume Design for Tim Chappel and Lizzy Gardiner, who incidentally also did the costumes for the original movie starring Terence Stamp and won an Academy Award® for their efforts the first time round, the musical also took home the 2010 What's On Stage Best New Musical Award in London.

The spectacular new stage musical will begin performances at The Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto for a 12-week only, pre-Broadway engagement.

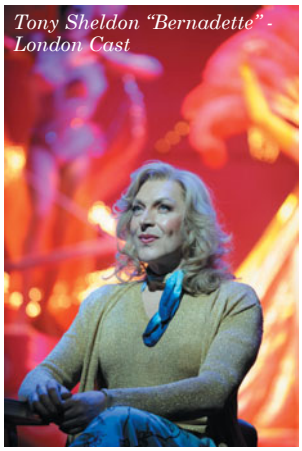
Adapted from the Academy Award® winning film PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT the Musical is an even more musical reincarnation of the heartwarming, uplifting adventure of three friends, who hop aboard a battered old bus searching for love and friendship in the middle of the Australian outback, and end up finding more than they could ever have dreamed.

With a dazzling array of outrageous costumes and featuring a score of dance floor classics, PRISCILLA is a sensational journey to the heart of fabulousso!

But get your tickets soon, cause I'm betting that they will become as scarce as foam flip-flops are gonna be at Walmart after Halloween...


Will Swenson "Hair"

Nick Adams "La Cage aux Folles"


Tony Sheldon "Bernadette" - London Cast

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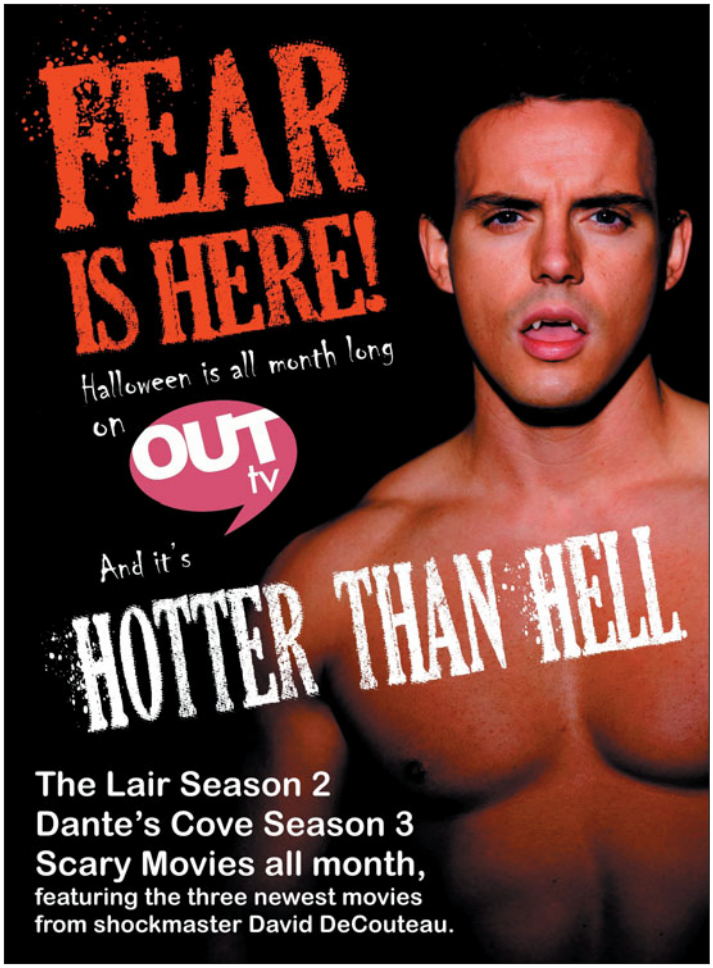
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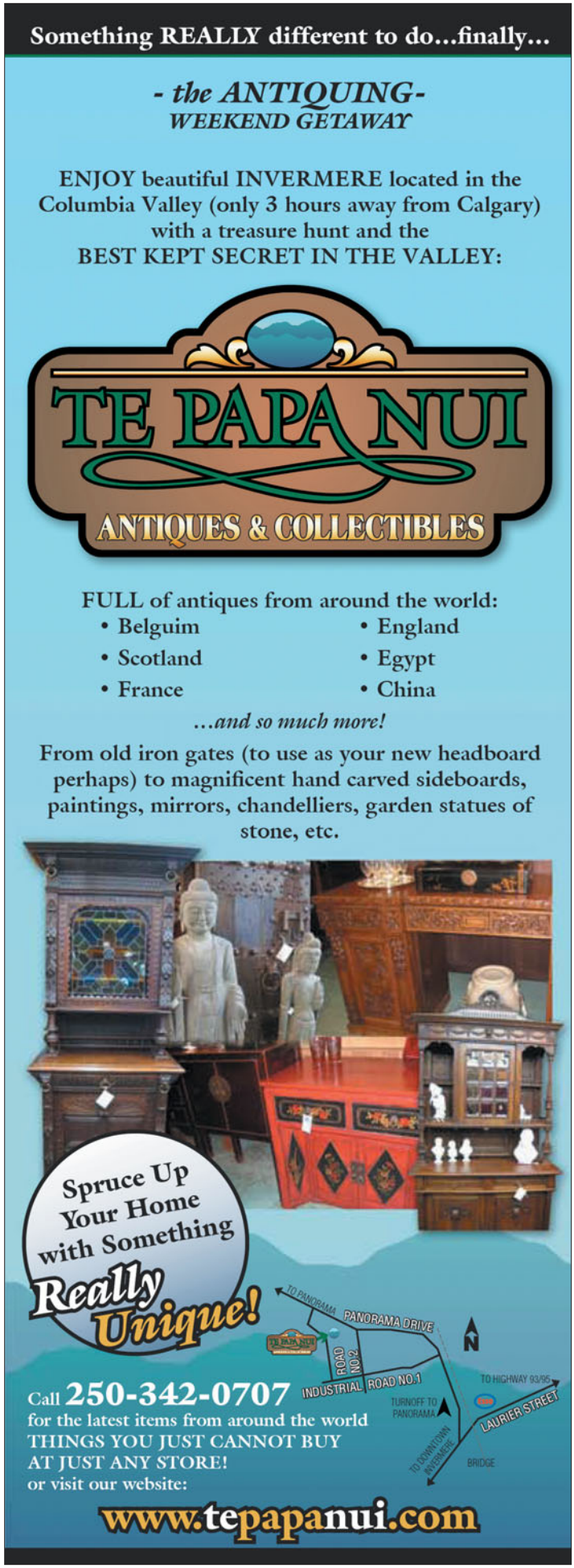
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The Gay Gastronome

~ DJ MITCHELL

Canadian wine-fed (hic) beef?

A story on Canoe.ca reports that one of the producers—Southern Plus Feedlots in Oliver, BC—is trying to produce a beef product that is equivalent to Japan's Kobe beef.

The owner of Southern Plus, Bill Freding, says he began feeding wine to cattle to supplement their grain diet last November.

The beef was then served at a special event at Government House in Victoria, BC, where a food writer said the beef was "equivalent or even better" than Japanese Kobe, American Kobe or the American Wagyu.

Freding describes the beef as "a little more tender compared to other products, including the Alberta Black Angus beef."

He says it has a brighter red colour and does have a different flavour, almost sweeter; though he wouldn't describe it as a wine flavour.

Along with their diet of mainly grain, the cattle are fed one litre of wine per head, which Freding says works out to about the same as a person having a glass a day.

My question would be to see if they have a preference to red or white wine; although red does go much better with beef—I wonder if they see it that way...hmmm.

Genetically engineered salmon still seems a bit fishy to me

The US Food and Drug Administration may soon approve genetically modified salmon for humans to eat—a prospect that is raising concern among some consumer advocates who consider the fish a threat to both health and the environment. Protests were recently held in Washington and in Prince Edward Island at the AquaBounty facility.

Among other things, the protesting groups are worried that no long-term or independent studies have been conducted to assess the human health risks associated with eating such fish. Spokesman Leo Broderick, also vice-chairman of the Council of Canadians, says he's concerned that Canada hasn't been consulted about the plan. "If the US approves GE salmon, PEI could soon become known around the world as the home of Frankensalmon," Broderick said in a release.

If AquaBounty's salmon were approved, it would mark the first time a genetically modified animal has been approved for America's dinner plates and restaurant menus. And that's what worries consumer advocates, who say that approving the salmon is opening the door to all sorts of genetically engineered animals, such as pigs and other mammals.

AquaBounty creates its salmon by taking a growth gene from the Chinook salmon and a gene "promoter" from the Ocean Pout, another type of fish. This Pout gene promoter simply turns on the Chinook salmon's growth gene, and the resulting salmon grow to market weight about twice as fast as ordinary Atlantic salmon; but they don't get larger overall.

I have to admit that last sentence still baffles me a bit. It must be in the wording: bigger-faster, not overall, market weight. As I said before, still seems a bit fishy to me!

What is Prosciutto?

Prosciutto is the Italian word for "ham," although most consumers outside of Italy associate prosciutto with a specific type of cure for ham. To make prosciutto, ham is salted and then air-dried for a period of up to two years. After curing, prosciutto is sliced into paper-thin pieces which are usually slightly transparent. It is typically eaten uncooked, on charcuterie platters, wrapped around fruit and vegetables, or in salads. In some cases, prosciutto may be lightly cooked, as is the case when it is tossed with pasta.

Within Italy, the term is generic for a specific cut of meat. The food which non-Italians call prosciutto is formally called prosciutto crudo, or "raw ham," because it is never actually cooked during the curing process. Prosciutto cotto, "cooked ham," is similar to the dish which non-Italians think of as "ham." Different prosciutto is also individually identified by processor and origin, for example Parma Ham for the Parma region of Italy.

The Cacao Genome

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientists have announced the preliminary release of the sequenced genome for the cacao tree. It's expected that the achievement will help sustain the supply of high-quality chocolate worldwide, while, at the same time, helping cacao farmers produce trees that can better resist droughts, diseases and pests.

Worldwide, the chocolate industry is now worth $16 billion. Approximately 70 pecent of this chocolate comes from West Africa and small farming operations. However, fungal disease can destroy up to 80 percent of crops, leading to approximately $725 million in losses annually and a higher global demand than can be supported. Now, with this code, it's hoped that scientists will be able to better identify genetic markers for specific genes with beneficial traits, thereby producing stronger trees with even bigger yields.

In the past, there has been little scientific research invested in the study of cocoa, compared to other crops such as wheat or corn—something that is now likely to change. It's hoped that this breakthrough will lead to greater benefits for farmers and manufacturers, and, oh yes, maybe even still better tasting chocolate for everyone.

Food and Wine Events Around the Globe

October 2010

October 1-10: Okanagan Fall Wine Festival, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia.

October 8-12: Anuga international food show (the largest in the world), Cologne, Germany.

October 14-16: Rocky Mountain Wine and Food Festival, Calgary, Alberta.

October 15-17: Indulge festival of food and flavours, St. Andrews, New Brunswick.

October 22-24: Mondial de la bière beer festival, Strasbourg, France.

October 23: Taste of Health plant-based food festival, Vancouver, British Columbia.

November 2010

November 5-6: Rocky Mountain Wine and Food Festival, Edmonton, Alberta.

November 5-7: Ottawa Wine and Food Show, Ottawa, Ontario.

November 11-14: New York 2010 Chocolate Show, New York, New York.

November 18-21: Gourmet Food and Wine Expo, Toronto, Ontario.

Tips for appreciating fine cheeses

Buying: Choose cheeses nearing their "best before" date. Shopping for fine cheeses is not like shopping for milk—don't look for the one with the most days or weeks left before their "best before date." To enjoy the full flavour of fine cheese, serve it one to ten days before the expiry date. If you are looking for cheese to eat right away or within 2-3 days of purchase, you generally can't go wrong with sale items. They tend to be at their peak!

Storing: Forget the plastic wrap. Save your cheese without stinking up the fridge. Wrap it in aluminum foil or place it in an airtight container and store it in the vegetable drawer. Some cheeses, such as very old cheddar, are best stored at room temperature, wrapped in a special cotton cloth. Alternatively, you can use a damp dishcloth sprinkled with a few drops of vinegar then place the bundle in a cake dish. Stored properly, these cheeses will stay tasting great for three to four weeks.

Freezing: Keep an eye on your watch! Freezing cheese is not recommended and should be used only as a last resort. Buy only the amount you need. While all cheeses can be frozen, they start to lose flavour within four hours of defrosting. If you must freeze, separate cheese into individual portions to minimize flavour loss.

Tasting: Experiment with beer. Traditionally, when we buy imported cheese, we tend to choose wine from the same region; but on hot summer days when we want something fresh, the new trend is to drink imported beer or local brews—and to do so with cheese. Definitely worth trying! Start with milder cheeses and work your way up to the stronger ones, and apply the same logic to the beer. You could serve pale lager or pilsner with Goat cheese, then a more medium or dark lager with Camembert, and finally some amber or brown ale with Blue cheese. Instead of a wine and cheese tasting, have some friends over and be the first to host a beer and cheese tasting. How cool is that!

The Real Deal - or not at all!

Every good gay host(ess) knows the difference between a champagne and a sparkling wine for example, but what about Feta and Camembert cheese—not to mention all of the other "specialty" named products we buy that are supposed to represent quality and excellence?

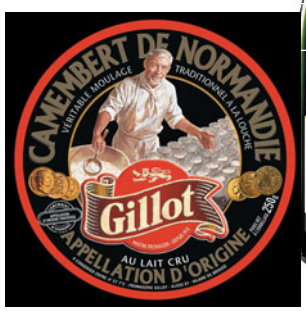
What is it that makes these products "special?" Is a rose by any other name still a rose? The EU doesn't think so.

The EU wants Canadian companies who produce similar products to stop using words like Scotch when related to whiskey, Feta when related to cheese, and Parma when related to ham, to name but a few, because they believe that these names are part of a products brand name and consumers recognize these particular products as the best.

In a draft agreement reached in January with Canadian negotiators, the EU wants all food and drink labeled with the following names to adhere to strict originating conditions or find a new name. For example:

- Feta Cheese — Must be produced on the mainland of Greece or the Island of Lesvos, and made from sheep's and/or goat's milk of the same area.
- Parma Ham — Must be from a Duroc or Landrance pig from the Parma region of Italy that was fed from the curds and whey left over after making Parma cheese (Parmesan).
- Camembert de Normandie — Must be made in Normandy, France with unpasteurized milk.

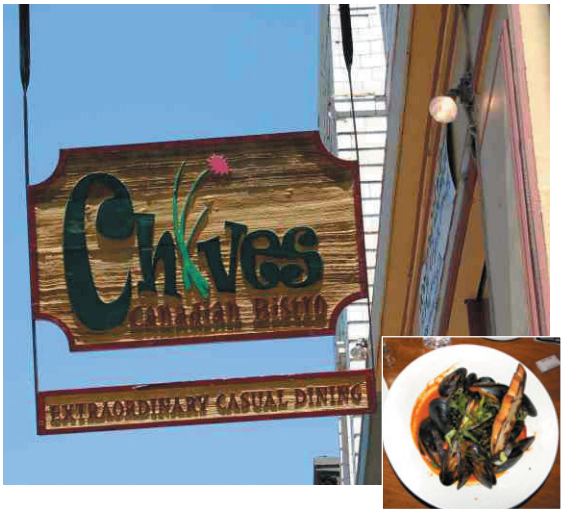
The group is set to meet again this month to continue their discussions; but, in the same draft, Europeans don't want Canadian products to even use terms such as "flavour" or "like" as it hints to the consumer what their product is a version of.



Taste of Canada

Who doesn't enjoy a romantic evening with a special someone enjoying an anniversary dinner at your favourite bistro? Or how about the chance to catch up with twenty of your closest friends with honey garlic wings and pitchers of your favourite local brew?

"Taste of Canada" will feature some of the best restaurants and hidden gems tested and tasted by OUTLOOKS.



Chives Canadian Bistro, Halifax, NS $$$

Don't let the unassuming entrance set any preconceived notions of what's in store. Once inside, the pumpkin orange walls and eclectic art will make you feel warm and cozy on a rainy Halifax night.

Chives' menu focuses on seasonal fare to ensure the highest standard. The menu is updated regularly and can be viewed on its website. Check it out before you go, so that you've got time in advance to make your choices. The night that we went, the scallops and fish cake seemed to be the winner with our group. The scallops were seared to perfection and "melted in our mouths."

Service staff are attentive, friendly and helpful with menu selections. One of our party had a problem with the dish that was brought to the table. After apologizing sincerely, bringing a complimentary glass of champagne and offering something else on the menu, all was quickly brought back into harmony. To our amazement, the new entree appeared within about ten minutes. A dessert sampler tray was also offered to end the evening. The maple crème brulee was one of the best I've tasted.

A great restaurant for gathering with friends for a fabulous evening of conversation and superb food.

1537 Barrington Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia / www.Chives.ca

Tomato Pizza, Montréal, QC $

Ever have a craving for a thin crust pizza with just the right amount of sauce? Tomato Pizza is the place to go. Enjoy the patio that spills out onto Sainte Catherine Street in the heart of Montréal's gay village. The constant parade of people going by will provide an array of dinner topics.

Montréal restaurants are very open to the "aporte votre vin" (bring your own wine). Tomato partakes in this wonderful custom. The local liquor store is only two shops down from the restaurant; so you won't even break a sweat toting along a bottle of your favourite cabernet.

You also need to bring a healthy appetite. The pizza is served in individual ten-inch sizes, so you can easily share the flavours with whom ever you bring.

A great place to top up the fuel tanks after a night out in the Village.

1272 Sainte-Catherine St E, Montréal, QC / www.tomatopizza.ca

Table 24 Restaurant, Salmon Arm, BC $$

Plan on making a stop at Table 24 and Salmon Arm, BC for your next weekend get-away from Vancouver. The restaurant is located in the Old Courthouse and is next door to the Public Art Gallery.

Table 24 also has an inventive menu that focuses on local produce. We stopped for what was supposed to be a quick lunch on our way to Kelowna and ended up taking two hours to enjoy the hospitality of owner Lenny Wells. The restaurant has partnered with the culinary arts program from a local school. The students are given the opportunity to check out the "real thing" before making a decision to get into the trade. Giving back to the community has been an important aspect of how Lenny runs his place.

Lenny has a board in the kitchen that he uses to post different menu ideas. He keeps track of the opinions of his guests and continues to improve on what doesn't work and celebrates those menu items that have an agreed appeal.

Now for the food: The Tropical tuna salad came with candied pecans, seared Ahi tuna, fresh spring greens and a coconut lime dressing. If you're an ice cream fan, Table 24 creates a different flavour each week.

Great fresh food in an unusual setting.

20 Hudson Avenue N.E., Salmon Arm, BC / www.Table24.ca

Chef Michael Noble
NOtABLE The Restaurant, Calgary

You've had an amazing journey in the culinary world over the past 25 years—you opened Catch, rated the Best Restaurant in Canada in 2003, Diva at the Met in Vancouver, headed up the culinary enhancement of Earls nationwide, have competed internationally—winning two Bocuse d'Or culinary awards, and the only Canadian chef to travel to Japan and compete against Iron Chef Morimoto.

Having had all of those experiences in your journey, what made you choose Calgary and the Montgomery area as the place for Notable?

I wanted a location that has a feeling of Community. A local place where people could come and feel comfortable. Spend some time with friends and enjoy some real food.

How did you come up with the name?

I was taking some vacation time with my wife driving through Kelowna at the time. We had been talking about what our new place would be like…big booths for privacy, community table to meet new friends, uncomplicated / real food. I've never been one to have my name up in lights but Notable just popped into my head and it seemed to work.

So what's with the blast furnace when you come into the place? The very large hardwood fired rotisserie is certainly a centrepiece for your open kitchen.

We wanted something that would draw people into the space. We use it to feature different slow roasted meats each night of the week. We do rotisserie-roasted chickens on it every night though. The secret to the recipe is the butter and chilli that we put in the cavity. As the chicken cooks the butter slowly melts and bastes the meat from the inside out. We season the outside of the bird with our blend of aromatic herbs. And when the savoury orange juices starts to run out of the chicken—you know it's done.

We had to try the Stilton Cheesecake. It's been a signature dish of yours for years and we can see why, it's incredible. But we also hear that there's a story associated with this dish?

Yes it dates back to my time with Diva. The Metropolitan was the pre and post hotel for a cruise line that docked in Vancouver. We knew that the cruisers would have some high expectations for their food so we wanted to make Diva the defining experience for our guests. We wanted a signature desert that would match the strong menu that had been developed for the main courses. Since we were expecting a number of American tourists—we were thinking that a nice cheesecake would work. But not just a regular cheesecake—it needed something different. I think that I raked my brain over it for two days before it kind of came to me in a dream. Really, one night I sat bolt upright in my sleep and said to my wife—STILTON! And then RHUBARB—two of the most unlikely partners for a cheesecake. But the next morning I went back to Diva and laid things out for the Pastry Chef. It took a couple of tries to get the proportions right with the Stilton and the cream cheese and then we had to educate the serving staff on how to sell the dish. After all, it was blue cheese and rhubarb. By the time I left Diva—it was outselling the featured Chocolate desert. It's been on the menu of all my restaurants ever since.

And I hope that your readers will love making it and sharing it with good friends and maybe some good wine, I'd suggest a California Zinfandel. **O**

Photo: DJ Mitchell

Stilton Cheesecake with Rhubarb Compote

Ingredients:

For shortbread crust

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes and softened

For filling

- 1/2 lb Stilton, rind discarded and cheese crumbled (1 cup)
- 3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs
- 1 (8 ounce) container sour cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

For rhubarb compote

- 1/2 cup Port
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 24 pink peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 2 pounds trimmed rhubarb, cut into 1/2-inch cubes (6 cups)
- 3 tablespoons sugar for caramel topping (optional)

Serves: 8 - 10

Preparation:

Make shortbread crust:
Preheat oven to 350°F.
Blend together flour and sugar with an electric mixer. Add butter and blend until mixture resembles coarse meal (it will not form a dough). Transfer to a buttered 24-cm springform pan and press evenly onto bottom. Bake in middle of oven until pale golden, about 30 minutes, then cool in pan on a rack. Reduce temperature to 300°F.

Make filling:
Beat together crumbled Stilton, cream cheese, and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on low speed. Beat in flour and add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in sour cream and vanilla, then pour filling over cooled crust in pan. Bake cheesecake in middle of oven until puffed and pale golden around edge, about 1 hour. Transfer cake in pan to rack and run a knife around edge of pan to loosen. Cool completely, about 2 hours. Chill, covered, until cold, at least 4 hours. Remove side of pan and transfer cake to a plate.

Make compote while cake is cooling:
Boil Port, 1/2 cup sugar, and peppercorns in a 12-inch nonstick skillet, stirring until sugar is dissolved, until reduced to about 1/2 cup, 2 to 3 minutes. Add rhubarb and gently stir to coat. Simmer rhubarb, stirring gently once after 5 minutes, until just tender but not falling apart, about 10 minutes, and transfer to a bowl. Chill compote, covered, until cold, at least 4 hours.

Make optional caramel topping:
Just before serving, sprinkle tablespoons sugar evenly over cheesecake and heat with a blowtorch, moving flame back and forth just over sugar until evenly melted and caramelized.

NOtaBLE
THE RESTAURANT

www.notabletherestaurant.ca
4611 Bowness Road NW, Calgary, Alberta

Photo: DJ Mitchell

~ DJ MITCHELL

TANGLED GARDEN

When traveling in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, a trip to Tangled Garden is a must for anyone who loves jellies, jams and vinegars—but not so much your typical ones.

Herbs and hips and husks hang in bunches from the ceiling of the shop. There are fresh-picked herbs, suspended in shimmering jellies, offering jewel-like confections with their colour, clarity and sparkle. The aromas in the store recapture the intensity of summer gardens. The little shop seems almost enchanted as if it could be the work of elves. And maybe it is; after all there, are chairs that are reserved specifically for them. Or maybe, like me, this is where they shop for some of the very best jellies, jams and conserves, vinegars, cordial and mustards, not to mention some wonderful salsa and chutneys.

And, if it is an "elfin" operation, then let me introduce you to the Head Elf herself—Beverley McClare.

You have been at this for over 25 years now. What brought you to develop Tangled Garden?

"Well, I have always been involved in the restaurant business, in one form or another, since university. In the 80s, I had my own place (where The Tempest is now) and started to grow tarragon and dill in a little garden. It was a challenge to find fresh herbs and I wanted to make tarragon, dill and garlic vinegar, which actually was the first Tangled Garden product."

I would have thought it was the jellies that were your passion?

"Well, I always wanted to do jellies, but back in the 80s, seasoned vinegar was the "hot" item. It actually took a decade to educate our customers about the jellies—and lots and lots and lots of tastings."

So, a typical question then: What is your favourite vinegar?

"At this time of year, it would have to be the Hearty Spice."

Keeping you on the spot then: With so many wonderful flavours, what about jellies? Which one is your favourite?

"It really depends on what I am preparing; but, the horseradish jelly and ginger lime thyme are right up there."

Is it true that, even with all the demand that you have for the products, all the ingredients are still hand-chopped, and that your production run is six jars at a time?

"We really are the definition of hand-crafted. We make 100 jars of jelly and jam in the small production kitchen each day. And, yes, we still make them in batches of six."

So one would assume then that you are 100 percent organic?

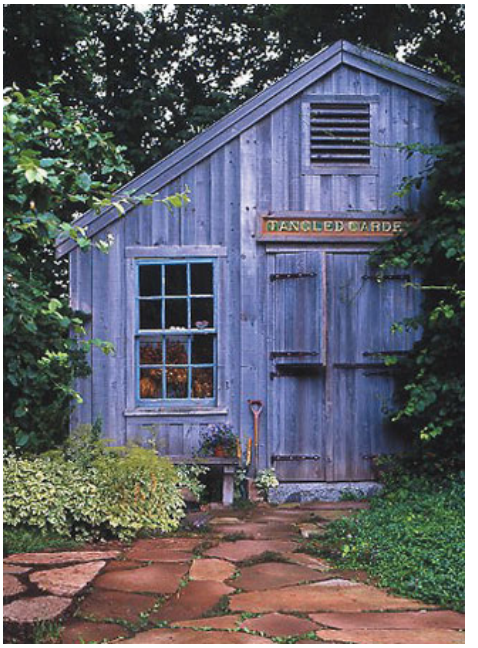
"Our herbs are grown organically and we use no preservatives or colouring in our products. But, for the best flavour, we suggest using the herb jelly within three years. Herb vinegars, on the other hand, are like a good wine and will improve with age."

Once a single room on a single acre, the store now sits on five acres brimming with lavender, rosemary, thyme and other fruits and flowers that go into these specialty products.

The property is as wonderful to the eye as it is to the nose. As you step from the shop out into the neat rows or perennials, there are sculptures in the gardens, ponds and water plants, a totally unique spiral maze made from flowers and plants, and a sign over a gate that leads to nowhere that reads: Nosce Te Ipsum, which means, know thyself.

There are plants growing that I certainly have never seen before in anyone's gardens—some reaching well over eight feet in height.

But let's not stray too far from the products themselves. What started out as a small, five-products-only operation, now has well over 65 tasty creations that truly do need to be tasted to believed. Hopefully, these few descriptions of the combinations of herb jellies will get both your flavour and bouquet senses tingling.



Ginger Lime Thyme

A truly versatile jelly. Delightful on chicken, pork or fish. Glaze prosciutto-wrapped scallops for a tart, sweet-and-salty combo. Try with goat cheese or simply as a lively wake-up on toast.

Apple Sage

Especially good with tangy cheese, cold sliced turkey or baked fish. Makes an excellent glaze for roast pork or duck.

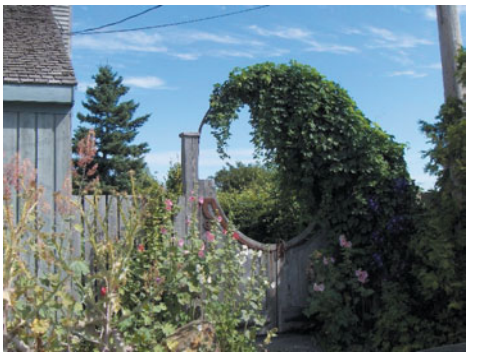
Lemon Rosemary

Tart and sweet, with lamb, chicken or fish. Melt and brush over pork or ham during roasting. Or, for a dessert, drizzle over your favourite cheesecake and enjoy the citrus herbal taste.

And, as intriguing as the jelly and herb combinations are, the selection of jam combinations are my personal favourites like Strawberry Tarragon, Verbena Blue (Wild Blueberry), Radiant Raspberry, Strawberry Lavender, Cherry Anise Hyssop and Peach Angelica.

Great on toast—even better on homemade ice cream.

For more information on Beverley's products or to have her ship some goodness to you, go to **www.tangledgarden.ns.ca**. O



Quick Looks

The Style Guys

There are some new faces in OUTLOOKS Magazine this month—the Style Guys, Jason Krell & Alykhan Velji—are taking over as the LOOKS Editors. Each month they will share with you what's hot in fashion, décor and beyond.

You may recognize Alykhan from design shows like *Designer Superstar Challenge*, *Style Department* with Suzanne Dimma and *My RONA Home*. Alykhan is one of Canada's hottest young interior designers and television personalities.

Jason, a long-time writer for OUTLOOKS, is a fashion and life-style PR consultant and former model. His insight in the fashion world, paired with Alykhan's design flare, makes them the perfect addition to Canada's favourite GLBT Magazine.

Holts Hosts

In an effort to create a better customer experience, Holt Renfrew has hired greeters to welcome shoppers to its nine stores across Canada. Company President Mark Derbyshire says, "It's all about creating a warm and inviting atmosphere—we want it to be a fun store."

Mother of All Fashion

Jeanne Beker, host of *Fashion Television*, has made the leap to ready-to-wear with her new collection, Edit. The affordable line of women's mix-and-match separates and outwear will be sold at Bay stores across Canada. Not to worry, she's not giving up FT yet.

He-Spanx?

If you've found yourself doing a lot of sucking in these days, Ript Skinz might have the answer you've been looking for: men's girdles. The line was released over the summer, and Ript Skinz will include thigh-firming bottoms and tight muscle shirts made with fabric infused with a patented cosmetic skin care formula that is supposed to "rejuvenate, moisturize, tighten and tone the skin."

STYLEOGRAPHY

The OUTLOOKS Magazine Style Guys will make their CosmoTV debut on October 6 at 9:00 p.m. (MST), with the premiere of *STYLEOGRAPHY*. Alykhan and Jason will be two of the fashion experts commenting on the evolving styles of Hollywood A-listers and teaching viewers how they can achieve their own celebrity-inspired looks. Other celebrity experts include David Clemmer from *Style by Jury* and Merle Ginsberg, Style Editor and judge on *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

FAB FALL

In most parts of our picturesque country, tank tops and afternoons on the patio have given way to sweaters and cozying up in front of the fire. It's sad and true; but mourning the loss of summer is not what fall is all about.

This October, we encourage you to fight the urge to hibernate with a new season of Tyra and embrace your inner Martha! In this, our first issue as the LOOKS editors, we want you to up the ante on your entertaining. From how to set the perfect harvest table to dressing for the occasion, we hope you will embrace the fall dinner table.

COCKTAIL CHIC

Navy Merino button cardigan, non-iron sport shirt, red Milano vintage chino and classic penny loafer from Brooks Brothers

Grey and white striped cardigan from GAP, $69.50

Tailored navy gingham shirt from GAP, $54.50

Black plaid slim shirt from the GAP, $54.99

Multi-coloured Derouen bow ties $15/each from Aldo

Maurice cotton fedora from Banana Republic, $62

Tumbled black leather belt from Banana Republic, $45

Galactic Minimalism black sneaks $110 from Aldo

DINNER GUEST

Wool Davidson duffle coat, camelhair argyle button cardigan, non-iron bold check dress shirt, University Collection Griffon slim tie, slim fit five-pocket Supima denim, leather Gusset boot all from Brooks Brothers

Salvatore Ferragamo leather dress shoe from Holt Renfrew, $490

Reversible black/brown plaque belt from Banana Republic, $78.00

Prep-stripe navy/red silk tie from Banana Republic, $74

Gucci cashmere peacoat, $2,845 from Holt Renfrew

Thin striped grey slim shirt from GAP, $49.50

Slim black pant from Joe Fresh, $39

Borjon brown dress shoe $110, Aldo

ON YOUR TABLE

TRADITIONAL WITH A *TWIST*

A simple palette of oranges and reds is inviting and creates a sense of warmth. Starting with a crisp white tablecloth is a must for any table and gives you a clean palette to work from. The large floral arrangment is the focal for this table flanked by dishes in a gorgeous burnt red. The twist comes from using palm leaves in the arrangement for something al little unexpected. Traditional cutlery and symmetry of the table lends itself to a more formal dinner.

Save money with the use of both artificial and real flowers. The mix will create a more dynamic look and go a long way in saving your pennies.

Candles are a must for any chic dinner party.

* All items are from PC Home available at Superstore and Loblaws.

Photos: Kyle Marquardt | kylefoto.com

ORGANIC **FLORAL**

A casual and relaxed table setting with bright bold yellow flowers mixed with organic walnut wood tones. The floral pattern is introduced with the napkins and then repeated in the runner placed vertically on the table for a more modern look. It's crisp, clean and simple.

No need to go out and buy all new dishes. Be sure to keep every day dishes white, this way you can use them for all your formal and informal parties.

Think outside the box, we used a walnut tray as a charger for something unexpected. This can also be used as a gift that guests can take home with them.

Save money by creating your own arrangements. These flowers cost under $20 and the vases were under $10, ones that you can use over and over again.

This simple and chic table runner is made up of the paper napkins. A great money saving idea that will also create a cohesive look for your table setting.

Photos: Kyle Marquardt | kylefoto.com

* All items are from PC Home available at Superstore and Loblaws.

Renovation File

with Maciek Mika

Photo: LiteWave Images

Tiling

If your bathroom or kitchen looks more like a set from *That 70s Show* than the modern penthouse look you want, consider tiling as your DIY starting point. Next to painting, laying tile is one of the easiest weekend projects going—which is why you can learn to do it at almost any hardware store. Take a class to get practice and gain confidence, and, of course, follow my tips below.

I would suggest that, before you begin ripping up your floor, however, you get your feet wet with a backsplash first. Floors require more prep work and accuracy, and, if it takes two tries, you won't be walking on a broken floor for weeks on end.

THE LOOK

Before you begin, think about the look you want for your space. The possibilities are endless; but, as a general rule, rectangular tiles offer a modern look, square more traditional, and mosaics are better left in the garden.

You should also consider the way you're laying them. Stacked tiles are more modern than staggered ones. Remember: the less complicated the pattern, the more contemporary the look. If I'm on the fence, I try laying them out on the floor first to see which is going to complement the room best.

PREP IT

If you plan to tile on a painted drywall surface, you're in luck—this simply requires some light sanding to rough-up the surface and you're ready to go. If you have existing tiles in place, you'll need to remove them and do a bit of repair work to the wall. You can either install a new piece of backer board on the studs or simply use a new piece of drywall (which will also be lighter and easier to cut).

Next step is to measure the area and draw out your design. Using graph paper, try to create a scale drawing and determine how much tile you'll need. I always suggest adding 10 percent extra material for edges and tricky cuts.

INSTALLATION

Once you have cleared the area, cut power to outlets, and prepped the surface, you're ready to get to the fun part!

Mark a focal point on the wall—this will likely be the centre of your wall—and lay the tiles out on your counter or floor to create the pattern. You want to start at the bottom row, like a bricklayer.

To attach the tiles, you have more decisions. You can use a tile mastic (a ready-to-use tile adhesive) or thinset mortar. Depending on the weight of the tile, both are good options. Place the edge of the first tile on the vertical line, leaving a 1/8" gap for grouting, and press into place. Give it a firm press and attach a temporary 1/8" spacer to all sides.

Continue this process until you get to a cut. Do it straight away; don't leave all the cuts until the end. You can rent a tile cutter on the cheap and, for most types of tile, you simply have to mark it, score it and snap it. Again, give this a try at the weekend workshop that you'll take first.

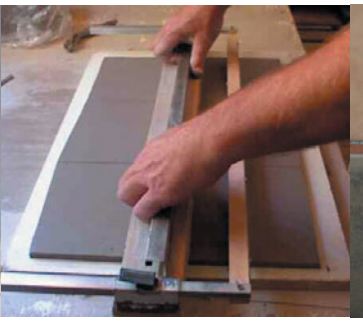
GROUTING

After the tiles are installed to your liking and you've let them set overnight, you can get to business. Like the tiles themselves, grout is available in any colour imaginable. I like to stick to white or shades of grey. Don't convince yourself that matching the grout to the tile is always the best option.

Using a sandless grout will avoid scratching. Mix up a batch according to the directions and begin applying it with a rubber float. Make sure you've filled in all the cracks, then remove the excess at a 45-degree angle.

THE REVEAL

Most grout will take an hour or two to set before you can clean up. Use a wet sponge to clean the grout from your shiny tiles, rinsing regularly. Once you've removed most of it, use a dry towel to bring back the shine. Especially in a bathroom, it's a good idea to seal the bottom edge of the job with silicone. Just give the tiles a week to fully set. O



The Gentlemen's Club

Photographed by Jessica Pechet
Art Direction by Len Mastaler
Styled by Kat Langille

On Keith: Raf blazer (Firoz)
Alexander McQueen sweater (Firoz)
Hugo Boss pants (Henry Singer)

On Scott: Hugo Boss collared shirt (Henry)
Prada tie (Henry Singer)
Raf blazer (Firoz)
H&M Wool Snood (stylist's own)
Hugo Boss cords (Henry Singer)

Diesel Shirt (Henry)
Diesel Sweater (Firoz)
Toscano Sweater Vest (Henry Singer)
Seven Jeans (Henry singer)
Glasses (stylist's own)

Hugo Boss Leather Jacket (Henry)
Hugo Boss sweater turtleneck (Henry)
Hugo Boss wool pant (Henry Singer)

On Keith: Etro Shirt (Henry Singer)
D&G bowtie (Henry Singer)
John Varvatos cardigan (Henry Singer)
Hugo Boss pants (Henry Singer)
American Apparel Suspenders (Stylist's own)

On Scott: Etro Shirt (Henry Singer)
Toscano Sweater Vest (Henry Singer)
Etro tie (Henry Singer)
Seven Jeans (Henry Singer)

Photographed by Jessica Pechet on location at Saltlik on Stephen Avenue
Models Keith and Scott at I Model Management (www.imodelmanagement.ca)
Hair and Makeup by Marissa Harapiak at I Model Artists Division

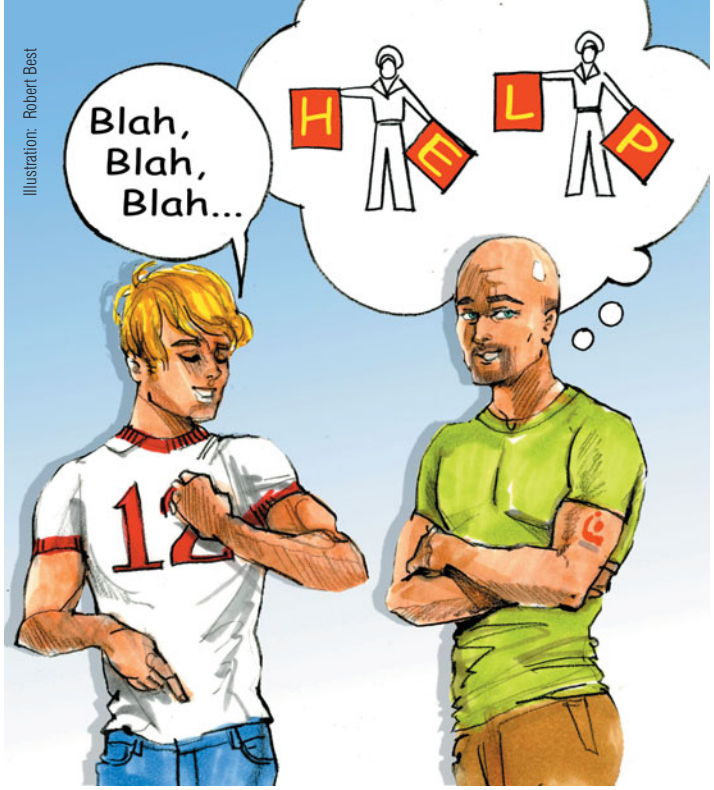


Illustration: Robert Best

~ J. CORBETT HOLMES

Shavings from My Head

SOS = Signs of a Socially Oblivious Single

As she rambled on, dragging the gaggle of gay men through another one of her stories—an altercation in café society—I did my best to dodge the plume of smoke exhaled from her non-stop mouth and headed toward my end of the sofa. To appear attentive, I focused on the gold, ruby-encrusted fish pin fastened to the lapel of her lipstick-red pantsuit.

" Oh!…yes!…It was *awful*!" she declared, giving the cloud one last push into the already smokey room of festive fags.

After completing the proclamation, she immediately drew another breath of smoke through her coordinating, red cigarette holder, then continued babbling on. The fish pin that I'd been fixating on began to disappear behind a nicotine cloud, as if it were drowning in industrial waste. While surrounded by nothing but non-smokers, she continued to pollute Mo-ville with smokey, self-endorsements, while everyone literally, choked on her words!

Although her stories alleged that she was well bred, wealthy and worldly, she was the personification of my greatest fear: Becoming an **SOS** = a **S**ocially **O**blivious **S**ingle.

Well into middle age, I've become increasingly aware of the alarming rise of the **SOS**—a condition, which, if you're not careful, can effortlessly ensconce itself in one's life, rendering you comatose to a balanced social interaction and stuck in an egocentric world revolving entirely around numero uno.

Akin to my fish-pin-smoke-stacked-society matron, unfortunately I've also encountered the **SOS** when dating. Recently, while dipping my toe into the dating pool, I sat through an entire dinner politely nodding while my date unrelentingly touted his attributes, never soliciting me for a single fact about myself. *All that's missing is the gold and ruby fish pin*, I thought, while choking on his run of narcissistic declarations.

But, his energy was sweet and conflicted with his non-stop talking. So I chalked it up to *maybe he's just nervous*, and agreed to another rendezvous. Halfway through date two, thoughts of the gold-and-ruby fish pin returned for another swim—a repeat performance of **SOS**. As he was utterly oblivious to my facial distress signals, I decided to throw up a flag.

"How come you haven't asked me anything?" I inquired.

"Cuz, I figure people will tell me what they want when they want to."

Ok, I thought, *that's fair*.

So, while he was momentarily stunted —noshing on his pizza—I quizzically asked, "Have you ever read any of my writing?" One of the few things I'd been able to get out on date one—figuring it would evoke an incessant tête-à-tête.

He continued chewing, accompanied by a nod back and forth versus up and down. Nada. This I found *especially* interesting, and thought (once he'd begun talking again…about his job!), *if I were he, dating a guy who wrote about dating and relationships, I would want to read his shit, for fear of becoming fodder!* Enter fodder.

Thus, throughout his endless rambling (our final date), my mind rambled too. I thought of the gold and ruby fish pin and the smoke signals. I thought about the excessive amounts I'd learned about him and how little he knew about me. I thought about how lonely it felt to be *so* close to someone, yet feel *so* distant. Then, I wondered if, behind *all* of that talking, *he* was lonely too.

Before the invention of the telephone, the computer, e-mail, texting, IM-ing, Facebook, Match.com (you get the drift), there was just one simple, unembellished form of communication: a person-to-person conversation; the exchange of ideas; the back and forth Q and A, which is not only the foundation, but also the creation and ultimately the definition of a relationship. And, if we get that part right, then the relationship gives us support and the knowledge that we are valued.

Communication through a person-to-person conversation seems basic. Right? But, with all the elaborate ways we're able to communicate today, has this helped or hindered the evolution of our relationships? Have we become so connected that we're disconnected at our headquarters?

While contemplating, I decided to ask a few people for their thoughts on the dynamics of a good date:

- "Whenever someone asks me a question and then starts looking around the room while I answer, well, I take that as my date doesn't care about my answer—or me, really!"
- "If a date brings a cell phone, then plunks it on the table…then constantly checks it during the date? Gross. If it rings and my date picks it up, unless it's an emergency, I'm done."
- "If I haven't learned as much about my date as I've shared, it makes me think that that person is hiding something."
- "If I'm talking, and my date interrupts me…it immediately makes me think that that person thinks what he/she has to say is more important. I hate that, and I never go out with that person again! Doing that is only the beginning of a bad relationship!"
- "I really like it when someone looks me in the eye while talking to me."

Living a single life has its merits. It means never sharing the bathroom, guilt-free farting in bed, no negotiating at TV-time, leaving your clothes on the floor, and buying only your favourite foods. The list is endless and rife with freedom and tons of "me" time. Yet, the downside can, at times, be lonely. And reminiscent of my smoke-spurting, fish-pin-wearing society matron, as well as my departed date, you can run the risk of becoming completely oblivious to the basics of a give-and-take relationship. Thus, as long as (it appears) people are listening—becoming an **SOS**.

Every day, we coexist with friends, family and coworkers. And, if single, we (generally aspire to) date. It's through those relationships, if all goes well, that we acquire social recognition, which is motivation for a repeat experience, another question, a paycheque, a deeper bond and a second date.

As a culture, with our admiration and fascination with the allure of technology-the big connection—if we're not careful, it can easily eclipse our most basic form of connection: how to have a proper conversation.

For me, writing this column (for the past four-plus years) has kept me seeking social connection, especially at its most basic form—asking a lot of questions and relishing in the reply. Because life is filled with little tests, and no matter what the response, it's always good to know the answer…I'm just sayin'.

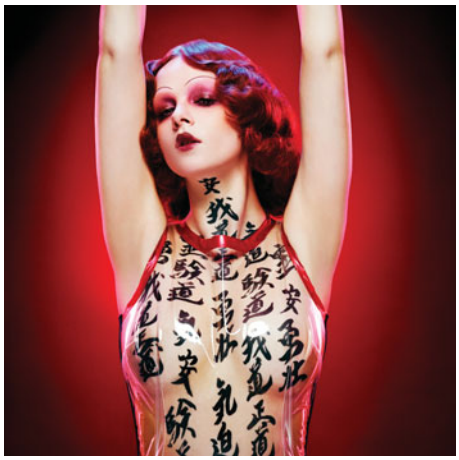
But, more importantly, what do *you* have to say?

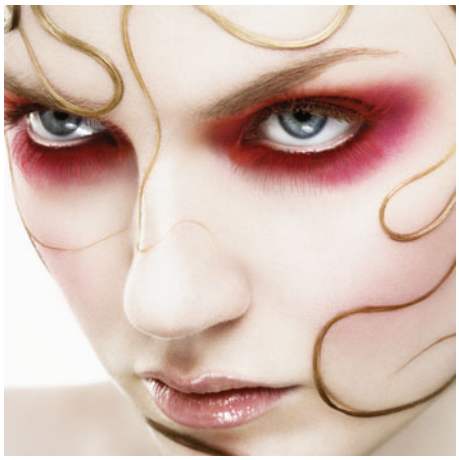
To share your thoughts, or get a closer shave—blog postings and previously published columns—visit **www.shavingsfrommyhead.com**. O

SHAVINGS FROM MY HEAD

FRAMED: Mike Ruiz

Whole lotta sexy… from Brooke to Tyra Banks, J Lo to Jenna Jameson, Dolly to Dita Von Teese—few do cool so hot, even fewer capture the glamorous inner sinner imagination of today's extravagant enigmas than New York-based, high-octane celebrity and fashion photographer **Mike Ruiz**. Innately intuitive, with a deft-eye for detail and full of sensual self-styled sizzle, Mike marries the sacred and profound in sophisticated unison. With a unique approach to the exploration of visceral brilliance, his finely crafted frames of reference have appeared in Vanity Fair, Conde Nast Traveler, Interview, Italian Elle, and Spanish and Brazilian Vogue. Additionally, Mike has contributed to D&G's "Hollywood" book and Iman's "The Beauty of Color" beauty book. He continues to explore different forms of expression via film, television and music. As founding partner of elite L.A. photography complex Miauhaus Studios, Mike further cements the reckless glamour of his noisy impunity to never follow trends. Vive la différence! The powerful pleasure of perfection never felt so fabulous.





First Page:
(clockwise from left)

Debbie Harry

Haute Couture
with an Edge

Intense Seduction

Lady Fortune

This Page:
(Left - top to bottom)

Wendy Williams

Adam Lambert

Brooke Shields

Kim Kardashian

(Right - top to bottom)

Pan

Tyra Banks

Dionisio

To see more of Mike's artwork, and to view pieces for sale, visit **www.mikeruiz.com**.

For updates on Mike, be sure to join **www.facebook.com/mikeruiz1**

~ JOSHUA MILLER

Photo: Maya Guez

Candis Cayne up front

Candis Cayne is definitely a living legend in gay culture, captivating us with her talent, beauty and, most of all, her humility. Candis has acted in *Wigstock*, *Stonewall*, *To Wong Foo* and *Starbooty*. The beauty also won Miss Continental Pageant in 2001, and graced many magazine ads before she came to national attention and became the first transgendered woman in history to have a reoccurring character on a prime-time series.

In 2007, Candis portrayed transgender mistress Carmelita on ABC's "*Dirty Sexy Money*." But don't fret, Candis is just getting started! We will be seeing her on the hit TV series *Nip/Tuck*, a new cocktail from Skyy Vodka and, of course, at the newly voted "Best Gay Bar in the World" by MTV's LOGO, The Abbey Food & Bar in West Hollywood.

How did you decide on the name Candis Cayne?

My Drag Mother was Lana Cayne. I wanted to keep it in the family. But looking back, if I knew then what I know now, I would probably have my parents choose my name; but it was something that I just couldn't change at that point.

Did you tell your parents before you decided on your transition or did you start transitioning and then thought, "It's time to tell my parents"?

I had started hormone therapy and was at the point where I couldn't go back. Then I came to the conclusion that it is time to tell them. They took it amazingly. My dad actually said, "It makes more sense your being a woman than a gay man."

How did your twin brother take your transition?

He was fine with it. I have been fortunate enough to not loose any family members due to my transition. It had a lot to do with the fact that I was always raised very grounded, and I remained that way. And they all realized that I was the same person I was twenty year ago. I had just grown up, grown wiser and grew a pair of breasts, lol. But seriously, it was more comfortable for them that I had not changed mentally, just physically.

When you decided to move forward with your transition, did you feel disconnected with your blood family? Or did you feel more connected with your gay family?

There definitely was a disconnect, but not because of anything my birth family did. It happened because, when I started the process, it was kind of an internal thing. I had to dive into it and not have any influence around me. It was weird for me because I was performing in drag at the time. I was really worried about my gay audience more than my family because I was afraid that they weren't going to accept me as transgender. I decided to transition in front of them and talk about it openly.

Candis and William Baldwin, Dirty Sexy Money.

Did you experience somebody else who had transitioned publicly and lose some of their following?

No, because in Downtown New York there weren't any. There was a handful of main Drag Queens who were working. So when I started, I really didn't have that example and I knew that the trans world was always really separated from the Chelsea Boys and the downtown scene. But I knew that, because I was a good performer, I had that edge, and if someone felt uncomfortable with the transition, I knew that they would still respect my performance.

In New York, there are trans performers and personalities like Amanda Lepore—someone who is a bit more animated. Who did you look up to during your transition?

My biggest inspiration was Paris. She was always well-rounded, well-cultured and well-spoken. She dressed impeccably, she was elegant and had class. She was someone that I looked at, and I knew that that was what I wanted to become. Even though I was known for wearing next to nothing, it's all about how you carry yourself. There were a couple of years where I didn't go back home for family functions. I stayed in New York City. I made excuses not to go back to Maui (if you can imagine that, lol). When I told my parents about my transition, I wrote them each a separate letter, explaining to them personally what I was feeling, and they flew to New York a month later.

Was your transition a natural progression for you or did you have to fight yourself?

I don't think that, when you're in this position, you fight yourself as much as you fight your fear of the unknown. Because, no matter how many people you see around you doing it, you don't understand it until you actually do it. For me, it was like finding a missing piece of the puzzle. I could breathe again for the first time. I always felt more comfortable when I was going out at night than I was during the day. I always knew, ever since I was little, that I was supposed to be this way. I just didn't know what it was or how to do it.

Was there ever a point in your transition that you ever thought you might have made a mistake?

A couple of bad relationships discourage you; but, for the most part, I never thought that I had made a mistake. A lot of transgender women feel insecure about how they are feeling about themselves that they put up with a lot of bullshit; but those are things that every girl has to deal with. I remember the night I finally decided to go through my transition. I was alone in my little, tiny New York Studio apartment. I looked in the mirror and, it sounds weird, but I saw this violet aura

around me. It was like a light bulb went off, and that's when I knew I wanted to grow old as a woman, not a man. The next day, I called Paris and said, "Girl, give me a shot!" lol

Your breakup with DJ Marco earlier this Spring comes after an 8 year relationship, and an engagement—how are you both doing?

We are both so busy in our careers, and that acts to help keep one moving forward. It's all good.

At what point did you realize that you were living the trans dream and that you are so lucky?

What's funny is that I never really say that, and I should. I have always been very driven and wanted to move forward and moving on to different projects, wondering what the next step of my life is going to be. I am so used to fighting an uphill battle with my life that it's rare that I actually get to sit back, relax and realize that I really am very lucky.

What is it like performing at the Most Famous Gay Hot Spot in the World?

One day, I was having dinner with Jeffrey Sanker and I was approached to do a show. It's amazing because it is so open and well-known and it is just such a gorgeous spot. In New York, it was a lot easier to go out into the street and perform outside, which is one of my favourite things to do in my show. It doesn't stop me from doing that here. But at the Abbey, people can't really see it live. They have to watch it on the screen when I perform outside of the building. In New York, there was a lot of fun energy in the crowd; but here, it is a little bit more laid back. But we still have a lot of fun, so come down and say hi on Monday evenings. O

Carlotta Gurl

MP Hedy Fry

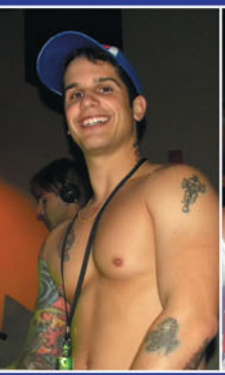
Justine Tyme

VANCOUVER Out & about

Odyssey Closing Show September 5

Planning an event in Vancouver? Contact Barry at 604.685.1377 and he'll see about covering it in Out & About. Photos by: Barry Piersdorff

Out & about CALGARY



Pierre Fitch September 3 at Sapien

Pride at Work Event September 9 at Sapien

Organizers Brad Harper, Michael Bach, Rob Mitchell, Calvin Campbell

Planning an event in Calgary? Contact Perry at pmah@outlooks.ca and he'll see about covering it in Out & About.

Pride Dance September 4

Kent Hehr

Barb Higgins and friends

Pride organizers

Pride Parade & Celebration September 5

7th Annual AFQOL Cut-A-Thon September 6 at Tomkins Park

Photos: Linda Huston Eckess

Kristine W September 4 at Twisted Element

Terri Stevens, Kristine W, Chi Chi Kaylin

Calgary Artists for Life September 9 at Cantos Music Foundation

2010 AIDS Walk for Life September 12 at Eau Claire

Chair Jeff Kapler and Executive Director Simonne LeBlanc

MONTREAL Out & about

Underground at Parking

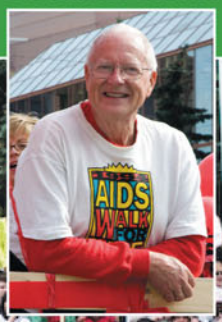
Photos: Erick Contreras

Piknic Electronik September 4

Out & about EDMONTON

Chantal Lonji Dang

Dr. Charles Bidwell



Andre Talbot of the Edmonton Eskimos

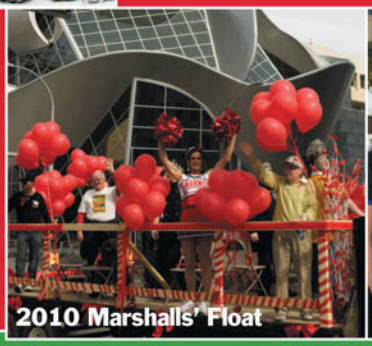
Debra & Joyce HIV Edmonton

2010 AIDS Walk for Life September 12

2010 AIDS Walk for Life Reception at 29 Armstrong

Founders of AIDS Network Edmonton

Staff of HIV Edmonton



2010 Marshalls' Float

Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose

Planning an event in Edmonton? Contact jackson@jacksonphotografix.com and he'll see about covering it in Out & About. Photos: jacksonphotografix

Autumn Harvest Campout September 3 – 6 at Blackfelds, Alberta

Don't You Wish...

Edwin Santiago, Photographer
Daniel Jay Hibbert, Hair Stylist
P3 Talent Management - New York

Ian is a Vancouver-based 21 year old. Growing up in a small town, Ianalways had ambitions for something more. His striking presence, green eyes, and great physique have helped him pursue that ambition and break into the world of modeling. While still relatively new to the industry, Ian has found a sense of confidence through the photo shoots he has done now, and looks forward to gaining even more experience as he progresses.

Ian stays in shape through his work, and a rigorous exercise regimen. He played soccer for ten years, and hockey for four years—both on league teams. He and his teammates had much success, and more importantly, became lifelong friends with lasting memories.

Ian also has a burgeoning career as a hip hop artist, finding joy in singing and creating music. His objective is to tell stories through song that others can relate to, and he is determined to write the next number one hit.

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October Horoscope

Show your Pride this October when many planets sweep through lovely Libra and sexy Scorpio. Expect a few surprises in your love department when Venus retrogrades. A certain you-know-who could become a you-know-what.

LIBRA (SEPTEMBER 24 - OCTOBER 23)
Love and its various needs will wind up costing you a few bucks this October. You have a need to be loved and adored and are focused on seeking and acquiring it now. Gay Libras with a love song in their hearts will have to pay a few musicians to get it played. But, as you gain the love of your life and the grand lifestyle you both seek, it is all worth it in the end…err isn't it?

SCORPIO (OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22)
You and your own special brand of charisma will be pushed into the limelight this October. Are you able to drum up the enthusiasm of the crowd and sway them to your way of thinking? Probably. But, you first have to decide if you want to be the leader of the Pride Parade. Most gay Scorps are content to control things from behind the scenes. No chance of that now.

SAGITTARIUS (NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 22)
Secret admirers and other hangers-on make their existence known to you this October. And they come to you in droves. Who knew that you had such a large and adoring fan base? Gay Archers could be flattered to the point of arrogance; but try to hold your ego in check. Remember that you attract even more flies with sugar than with sass…or something like that.

CAPRICORN (DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 20)
Friends come to the rescue this October and bring you out of your doldrums. Pink Caps with nothing on their social calendar soon find it filling up to overflowing. Enjoy your popularity surge and see how you can add to the excitement and the festivities. Wearing a lampshade on your head may be one way to do it; but I don't recommend it.

AQUARIUS (JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 19)
Your career takes off and you can control its direction. Have you been concentrating on your professional path, Aqueerius? If not, get on the case. If so, use your innate sense of political acumen to make the right move and create the right opportunity for advancement. Of course, you could just take some time off and coast, but why not do that after you get where you want?

PISCES (FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 20)
October could be an excellent month to travel, Guppy. Do you have any vacation plans? If not, you may want to try to plan at least a few long weekends. The idea here is to expand your current space and experience some new places and people, or try a new course of study. Take a yoga class or join a book club. Whatever you do, make it totally new and unexpected.

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)
Proud Rams are more feisty and alluring than usual this October. Will you kick up your heels for any old soul? Be prepared. You will have many many, choices from the dating tasting menu; but try to be discerning and discreet. Tiny things may have a way of blowing up, way out of proportion. Ah, I guess you can only dream that that will happen!

TAURUS (APRIL 21 - MAY 21)
October is the month to make connections. Plug in and see who lights up. Current relationships may need some tender loving care. Are you getting all that you need from them? If not, see if you can make inroads into long-standing issues. For queer Bulls on the hoof, trot over and explore some new pastures. You are ready to run with the best of them.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)
Get more involved in healthy activities, pink Twin. It is never too late to slim and trim for cruise season. October is also good for getting long standing tasks completed and off your desk. You muster greater reserves of energy and concentration, for a change. Hurry, and get moving on your projects before your attention is diverted and squandered. Oops—too late!

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23)
Gay Crabs find ways of enjoying themselves all through the month. You can find many more opportunities to showcase your personal talents, creativity and general good nature. Good thing too! You were getting too boring and fried from too much work. See what tasks you can defer, and take some time to enjoy life. That does not mean leaving work at five rather than at eight.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUGUST 23)
Turn your attention to your domestic agenda. You can improve your surroundings and make them the centre of activity. Find any excuse to entertain at home in October. Pick from your flock and arrange a stimulating group for a stimulating evening. Proud Lions can become the talk to the town and the A-list invitation to receive. But, maybe you are angling for a lower letter?

VIRGO (AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 23)
There is a lot going on in your mind this October. Is it an opportunity to clear out the cobwebs and focus more on important life issues? Maybe. But, at least you should take some time to let your mind wander, relax and destress. Try not to agitate. Don't let nit picky annoyances take up your mental bandwidth. Gain a new perspective and then take your act on the road.

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It's that time of year again, the gayest holiday of the year…Halloween. It's the week where everyone, not just the drag queens, gets an opportunity to become someone they are not.

And this year's edition of **Halloween on Church** will be no exception I'm sure. I attended last year's festivities and I can tell you first-hand that it is an absolute riot—and the costumes that people make are amazing.

This year, as in the past, the village businesses will dress up their windows and storefronts, outside and in, with Halloween decor which is referred to as The Village Scare Scape!

The week kicks off on October 24 and zombies its way through to the 31st of course.

The annual culinary festival will see the village restaurants participating with devilicious menu offerings. So, for the daring, there are bound to be some savoury treats, and maybe a trick here and there for good measure.

Next up is the Church Street Jack-O-Lantern Competition on Friday, October 29 from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m., where anyone can come down to the heart of the village, sign up, be given sharp instruments and test out his/her carving skills—not on one another—but on the pumpkins. Prizes will be awarded for the winning pumpkins.

And then comes the big day and the annual Halloween Block Party from 7:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. (Block Party Logo) where the streets are closed off and thousands gather for the biggest (and most fun) Halloween party in Toronto. Make sure to bring your camera and join participants from all over the GTA.

In addition, the village bars and nightclubs will be hosting a selection of Halloween events all week long leading up to the Block Party!

For more information, check out **www.churchwellesleyvillage.ca**.

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